

BURIAL, LANDSCAPE
AND IDENTITY
IN EARLY MEDIEVAL WESSEX

Kate Mees



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IN EARLY MEDIEVAL WESSEX

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BURIAL, LANDSCAPE AND IDENTITY
IN EARLY MEDIEVAL WESSEX

Kate Mees

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For Mum, Dad and Thomas

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Abbreviations

aOD	above Ordnance Datum
ASC	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> (ed. and trans. Swanton 1996)
DB	Domesday Book
DEB	<i>De Excidio Britanniae</i> (ed. and trans. Winterbottom 1978)
GIS	Geographical Information System(s)
GP	<i>Willelmi Malmesbiriensis De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum libri quinque</i> (ed. Hamilton 1870)
HE	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</i> (trans. Shirley-Price 1990)
HER	Historic Environment Record
Margary	Roman roads cited by number in Margary 1973
NGR	National Grid Reference
NMR	National Monuments Record – denotes entries in the online database, <i>Pastscape</i> (http://pastscape.org.uk)
OE	Old English
OS	Ordnance Survey
PDNHAS	<i>Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society</i>
PHFCAS	<i>Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society</i>
PSANHS	<i>Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society</i>
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England
S	charters cited by catalogue number in Sawyer 1968
SFB	sunken-featured building
WANHM	<i>Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine</i>

Note on Period Terminology and Other Definitions

The term 'Anglo-Saxon' is considered by some to be contentious, in that it carries with it particular ethno-cultural assumptions.¹ While 'early medieval' is therefore the principal term used in this book to denote the period between c. AD 450 and 1066, 'Anglo-Saxon' is so deeply entrenched in the existing literature that it would be impractical to disregard it altogether. The chronological terms 'Early Anglo-Saxon' (c. AD 450–650), 'Middle Anglo-Saxon' (c. AD 650–850) and 'Late Anglo-Saxon' (c. AD 850–1066) are also used, in a culturally neutral sense.

Where parishes and counties are referred to throughout the text, these denote the pre-1851 ecclesiastical parishes and historic counties, unless otherwise stated. Similarly, unless otherwise stated, hundreds are those recorded at the time of the Domesday survey, and their names are those used in the Alecto County Editions of Domesday Book,² with single inverted commas indicating a name derived from a place that disappeared before the early nineteenth century, and double inverted commas indicating a name found only in the Exon Domesday or Geld Rolls, for which no later equivalent is known.

¹ Reynolds 1985; Lucy 1999, 33; Rippon *et al.* 2015, 13; Oosthuizen 2017, ix–x

² Thorn 1989a; 1989b; 1989c; 1991.

Introduction

Perspectives, Approaches and Context

This book is about the places in which people living in the nascent Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex buried their dead, and how they came to make those choices. It is about the material elements of the landscapes that they inhabited, with which they interacted and which exerted a dynamic influence on how their lives unfolded. Of course, burial location was guided, at least in part, by practical concerns. How far would mourners be prepared to travel with the corpse? Which areas of land were designated for the disposal of the dead, and who was permitted to use them? These factors, heavily influenced by the nature of the physical environment and cultural milieu, compelled communities to act in certain ways. But burial practices also have the potential to reveal much about how people conceptualised and actively managed their surroundings. The conscious decisions made by mourners contributed to shaping social relations and continually added new layers and accents of meaning to the landscape. The traces on the land that had been left by previous generations, and by the prehistoric and Roman populations before them, provided the reference points and context for the forging of new traditions.

Scant written evidence survives – or indeed was ever produced – to illuminate the lived experiences of the farming communities that occupied Wessex in the half-millennium following the retreat of Roman authority. Yet we know that, for this area of southern England, in common with many other places in Britain and north-west Europe, this was a transformative era. The period spanning the fifth to ninth centuries AD saw the emergence from the obscure ‘tribal’ origins of the powerful West Saxon kingdom, the conversion of its people – at least nominally – to a transformed, continental form of Christianity, and deep-seated changes in societal and landscape organisation. These were not straightforward, linear processes, but rather a series of interdependent paradigm shifts which required a particular set of conditions in order to take root. The society that began to coalesce from around AD 600 can be seen as the cumulative result of both external influences and insular, post-imperial transfigurations.

Traditional views of the initial post-Roman centuries, based largely upon later accounts set out in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, are dominated by narratives of territorial conquest and the displacement of the inhabitants of lowland Britain by incoming groups from northern Germany and southern Scandinavia. Support for this model was found, from the mid-nineteenth century, in what could be inferred from the distribution of distinctive new mortuary practices and material culture derived from graves. These patterns could outwardly be seen to correlate closely with the ethnic realignments implied by the historical accounts. Arguments remain, however, as to whether the archaeological material truly reflects these events in any coherent way, or indeed

if it is right to conceive of post-Roman Britain in terms of discrete ethnic groupings at all. Wessex bridged the notional divide between a progressively dominant 'Anglo-Saxon' culture to the east and a prevailing 'sub-Roman' or 'British' heritage to the west. Funerary traditions on either side of this apparent frontier have hitherto been studied in relative isolation. This has potentially masked subtleties and complexities inherent in the burial record. How well does the funerary evidence, when examined comprehensively at a close scale, match up with the established picture?

In addition to several centuries' worth of material from excavated cemeteries and burial sites, recorded with varying degrees of accuracy, the exponentially growing archive of 'grey literature' generated through development-led archaeological work is a rich source of information on burial practices in early medieval Wessex. Archaeologists are also accumulating palaeoenvironmental data at an accelerated rate and, though coverage is still fragmentary, these are of immense importance in revealing past patterns of land use. We can only hope to gain an insight into the changing character of the early medieval funerary landscape, through time and from place to place, by attempting to weave together the disparate strands of available evidence – buried within the soil, inscribed in charters, encoded in place-names. This book therefore takes a fine-grained, regional scale of approach which is alert to the subtleties of local detail, but equally situates the funerary evidence against the backdrop of societal change at the macro level.

Approaches to landscape

Notions of landscape are multifarious and evade definition. The term itself – a rendering of the Dutch *landschap* – initially gained currency from the seventeenth century with the emergence of artistic trends for depicting natural scenery and pastoral tableaux. Preoccupations with capturing the landscape and the sublimity of nature as a 'window to the self' intensified in both art and literature during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the context of the Romantic movement. It is arguably as part of this same trajectory that the discipline of English rural landscape studies can be seen to emerge in the mid-twentieth century, the foremost figure in which was W. G. Hoskins.¹ Implicit in Hoskins' work was a particular way of seeing. This way of viewing the landscape, though based on an assumed empiricism that asserted that the best way to learn about the land was to 'go out and get mud on your boots', was nevertheless suffused with nostalgia and Romanticism.² Yet the legacy of this early phase of landscape archaeology, as pioneered by Hoskins, O. G. S. Crawford and others, should not be undervalued. The fundamental idea of landscape as a form of historical palimpsest – which can be traced back even further, to the work of F. W. Maitland in the late nineteenth century – continues to be influential and is a powerful way of conceptualising how antecedent features of different periods intersect and interact.

Archaeology reached a juncture in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Reacting against the perceived impersonality and detachment of the scientific methods

¹ Hoskins 1955; cf. Johnson 2007.

² Johnson 2007, 40.

and 'totalizing or reductionist frameworks' such as systems theory employed in the New Archaeology of the 1960 and 1970s,³ proponents of 'post-processualism' instead placed emphasis on the centrality of human agency in shaping the environment, and argued that our interpretations of the past are inevitably subjective. Post-processualism, as manifested chiefly in the field of prehistory, denounced, on the one hand, 'scientific' approaches for ignoring the human experience or reducing it to rigid classifications and, on the other, the anti-modernist 'Little Englander' aesthetic that characterised landscape history as championed by Hoskins.⁴ The English landscape tradition was criticised by post-processualists for its highly visual, 'Cartesian' perspective on the world; the landscape was said to be viewed and charted through a particular, privileged 'gaze'.⁵ Hence, other ways of thinking about landscape, which drew on sensory and phenomenological approaches, were encouraged in order to make the 'imaginative leaps' necessary to try to understand how people in the past might have conceptualised their relationship with the land.⁶

In contrast with prehistorians, archaeologists of historic periods have tended to resist embracing post-processual theoretical approaches to landscape, and medieval archaeology has indeed been slow to develop any kind of universal or cohesive theoretical framework.⁷ Scholars of medieval landscape and rural settlement have on the whole shown a reluctance to engage with more reflective and experiential approaches, in favour of empirical methods in the English landscape tradition.⁸ Early medieval funerary archaeology has, however, been rather more receptive than settlement archaeology to elements of post-processual theory. Work by Sam Lucy on the landscape context of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in East Yorkshire, for example, combined social and symbolic approaches,⁹ partly stimulated by the work of prehistorians such as Parker Pearson and Bevan.¹⁰ Indeed, new ideas surrounding concepts of identity, memory and ideology in theoretically aware studies by medievalists have been influential in their own right.¹¹

Still, as Stephen Rippon has advocated, the intrinsic value of rigorous, evidence-based empirical research – deriving from both fieldwork and desk-based investigation – which integrates theoretical elements where appropriate, should not be underestimated.¹² Cartographic and analytical techniques such as GIS and remote sensing, which could be criticised as dehumanising, reductionist or environmentally deterministic given their inherently top-down perspective and scientific detachment, are vital tools at our disposal for this kind of research, provided that they are used critically.¹³ Not least, they are indispensable in attempting to address the challenges increasingly posed by the accumulation of 'big data', from which we

³ Cf. Fleming 2006, 268.

⁴ Bender 1998.

⁵ Fleming 2006, 269.

⁶ E.g. Tilley 1994; Bender 1998; Edmonds 1999; cf. Ashmore and Knapp 1999.

⁷ Gerrard 2003; Gilchrist 2009; McClain 2012.

⁸ Gilchrist 2009, 391.

⁹ Lucy 1998.

¹⁰ Parker Pearson 1982; 1993; Bevan 1994.

¹¹ E.g. Holtorf and Williams 2006; Williams 2006; Devlin 2007; Sayer and Williams 2009; cf. Semple 2013, 7.

¹² Rippon 2009, 245.

¹³ Witcher 1999.

can undoubtedly reap rewards.¹⁴ Studies of the early medieval British landscape over the past fifteen years, by emergent scholars such as Simon Draper and Mary Chester-Kadwell and by established figures such as Tom Williamson, have demonstrated that a balanced view is achievable in reasserting the importance of topography, pedology and other aspects of the natural environment in shaping landscape character and past communities' experience of their surroundings.¹⁵ Historians of the early Middle Ages have, too, been inclined to retain a pragmatic outlook. As John Blair maintains, objectivity is not unattainable: 'events really happened in Anglo-Saxon England, and although most of them are irrevocably lost, we can recover some of them and form hypotheses about them that are either right or wrong.'¹⁶ This book takes the middle ground and, while not following any explicit theoretical tradition, it seeks to integrate perspectives and sources from a range of disciplinary avenues, among them the latest available archaeological data, toponymy, historical sources and spatial analysis that takes into account dynamic patterns of interaction between humans and the environment.

The physical and cultural landscapes of Wessex

The Wessex landscape is commonly perceived to be overwhelmingly dominated by chalk downland, evoking images of Thomas Hardy's part-imagined territory. This reflects, too, the long and intensive history of archaeological investigation on the chalklands, which was already prolific in Hardy's day through the activities of early antiquarian pioneers. Wessex has been dubbed the 'cradle' of British pre-history owing to the presence of some of the most significant and best-preserved Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age landscapes in Europe.¹⁷ Although cretaceous bedrock certainly underlies a large swathe of the region, the geology and landscape character of Wessex is exceptionally diverse, incorporating sheltered coastal plains underlain by tertiary sands and gravels, Jurassic limestone hills, clay vales, the low-lying marshland of the Somerset Levels and the rugged uplands of Exmoor.

The four historic counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset form the geographical focus of this book (Figure 1). While the system of shires was not established until relatively late in the period of study, the historic counties are useful and convenient points of reference and units of analysis, partly owing to the ways in which archives and historic environment records are organised and managed. Together, these four counties form a discrete, coherent unit of investigation, approximately analogous with the nucleus of the established kingdom of Wessex. The diverse geology, topography and landscape character of this area offers the potential to explore how burial practices relate to such variations. The early medieval burial record of Dorset and Somerset is considered to reflect a greater degree of 'British' inheritance, whereas 'Anglo-Saxon' furnished burial customs ostensibly predominate in Hampshire and much of Wiltshire. Furthermore, the

¹⁴ Cooper and Green 2016.

¹⁵ Draper 2006; Chester-Kadwell 2009; Williamson 2013; cf. Rippon 2009, 241.

¹⁶ Blair 2018, 18.

¹⁷ Aston and Lewis 1994, 2; Sharples 2010, 15.

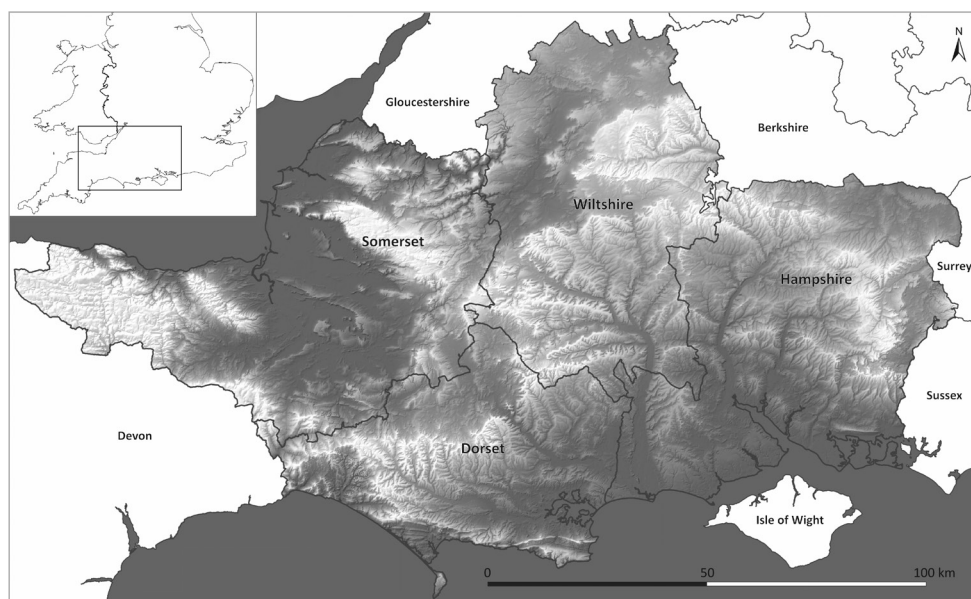


Figure 1. The topography of the study area.

counties possess contrasting research traditions and histories of investigation: as mentioned above, the chalklands of Wiltshire and Dorset were fertile ground for early modern antiquarian exploration, while modern rescue- and development-led archaeological investigation has been conducted elsewhere to varying degrees.

Considering the ways in which social territories may have been organised in the past is crucial to an understanding of the historic landscape. Differences in landscape character from area to area would have been apparent to people inhabiting and travelling through the countryside and would have had a significant impact upon land use, economy and society.¹⁸ Although it is possible to trace a number of shires as far back as the eighth century, and in some cases arguably to earlier ‘tribal’ divisions, the administrative system of counties is, to a great extent, a construction of the ninth to eleventh centuries.¹⁹ Moreover, the boundaries of the shires often cut across the grain of the existing natural and cultural landscape. Hence, in order to study the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon landscape effectively, it is useful to attempt to identify the geographical zones that are likely to have held significance for local communities over the *longue durée*.

The evidence is thus examined within the framework of *pays* – in effect, ‘nested’ units of investigation used alongside the historic counties. ‘*Pays*’ is a term employed in landscape history and historical geography to identify, define and categorise areas or social territories that possess an innately distinctive cultural or topographic identity.²⁰ These areas, such as areas of downland, heathland, lowland vale, fenland

¹⁸ Draper 2006; Rippon 2012, 3.

¹⁹ Yorke 1995, 84–9.

²⁰ Everitt 1970; 1986; Phythian-Adams 1993, 24; Brookes 2007a; Rippon 2012, 18; Rippon *et al.* 2015, 42.

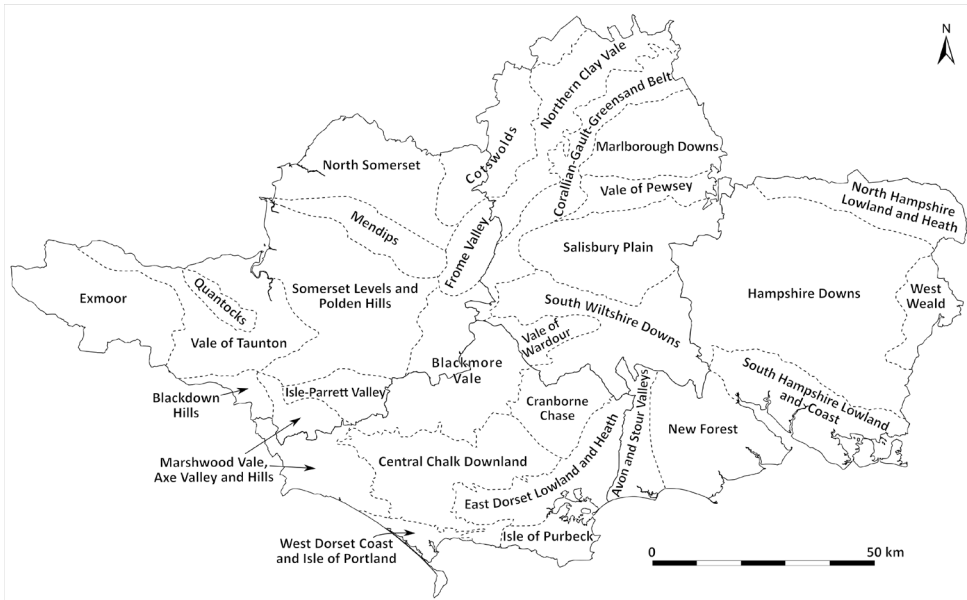


Figure 2. The *pays* of the study area.

or moorland, can be defined by geology, pedology, hydrology or physical geography. Charles Phythian-Adams discussed the impact of the physical landscape upon human territoriality through his concept of ‘cultural provinces’ based on river drainage basins and watersheds, which represent ‘identifiable lines of punctuation’ in the landscape.²¹ Landscape character can also be shaped by other less tangible characteristics, such as historic cultural identity or past patterns of land use.²² The delineation of *pays* highlights the extent to which administrative units are often artificially imposed upon the landscape, as the product of opportunistic or strategic conquest and expansion. Of course, that is not to say that territorial divisions were not present during the period of study too, and studying the landscape at a local and sub-regional level can help to identify these early units. Rather than being driven by environmental determinism, such an approach emphasises the ‘constant process of negotiation between societies and land’.²³

Thirty *pays* have thus been identified across the area of study (Figure 2), the basic geological and topographical characteristics of which are outlined in Table 1, following the approach taken by *The Fields of Britannia*.²⁴ These descriptions are of course highly simplified and, as outlined above, what makes each *pays* unique is a combination of cultural characteristics and complex geological and topographical attributes – space constraints preclude these being elaborated here.

²¹ Phythian-Adams 1993.

²² Thirsk 2000.

²³ Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 33

²⁴ Rippon *et al.* 2015.

Introduction

Table 1. Simplified predominant geology and relief of the pays within the study area.

<i>Pays</i>	<i>Predominant geology</i>	<i>Relief</i>
North Hampshire	Sands and clays	Lowland
Lowland and Heath		
West Weald	Gaults and greensands	Intermediate
Hampshire Downs	Chalk, some clay-with-flints	Intermediate, with valleys
Avon and Stour Valleys	Sands and clays	Lowland
South Hampshire	Sands and clays; lowland	Lowland
Lowland and Coast		
New Forest	Sands, gravels and clays	Lowland
Cotswolds	Mudstones and limestones	Intermediate
Northern Clay Vale	Clays	Lowland
Corallian–Gault– Greensand Belt	Mixed (clays, mudstones, sandstones, gault, greensand)	Intermediate
Marlborough Downs	Chalk	Intermediate, with valleys
Vale of Pewsey	Gaults and greensands	Lowland
Salisbury Plain	Chalk	Intermediate, with valleys
South Wiltshire Downs	Chalk	Intermediate, with valleys
Vale of Wardour	Sandstones, clays, limestones	Lowland
Cranborne Chase	Chalk, some clay-with-flints	Intermediate, with valleys
East Dorset Lowland and Heath	Sands, gravels and clays	Lowland
Isle of Purbeck	Mixed	Lowland
Blackmore Vale	Clays	Lowland
Central Chalk Downlands	Chalk	Intermediate, with valleys
West Dorset Coast and Isle of Portland	Limestones and clays	Intermediate
Marshwood Vale, Axe Valley and Hills	Clays	Intermediate
Exmoor	Slates and sandstones	Upland
Vale of Taunton	Clays and mudstones	Lowland
Quantocks	Triassic sandstones	Intermediate
Blackdown Hills	Greensands and mudstones	Intermediate
Isle–Parrett Valley	Mixed	Lowland
Somerset Levels and Polden Hills	Mudstones, siltstones, sandstones	Lowland
Frome Valley	Sandstones, limestones	Lowland
Mendips	Limestone and mudstones	Intermediate
North Somerset	Mudstones, siltstones, limestones and sandstones	Intermediate

The early history of Wessex

Although the boundaries of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom varied during the period of study, these counties, together with Berkshire and Devon, had all come under West Saxon control by the mid-ninth century. The history of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom holds relevance, not least because the archaeological material has often been interpreted through the framework of narratives provided by the historical accounts (often written long after the events occurred), the inherent problems with which are discussed further in Chapter 3.

By the time Wessex had reached the peak of its power in the ninth century, the kingdom controlled a large proportion of southern Britain; prior to this, however, West Saxon control of certain areas was intermittent and insecure.²⁵ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* gives the impression that the origins of Wessex lay in southern Hampshire, and state that the kingdom was founded by a figure named Cerdic, and his son, Cynric, who landed at *Cerdicesora* (possibly Christchurch harbour) in AD 495 and conquered the surrounding area in the following decades. That Cerdic was at the root of the West Saxon dynasty is supported by the Genealogical Regnal List, although this places his reign later, between AD 538 and 554.²⁶ Cerdic is said to have fought a key battle at *Cerdicesford* in AD 519 (interpreted as Chalford, on the River Avon south of Salisbury), the date of which is marked by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as the beginning of the Wessex lineage. The Isle of Wight was purportedly conquered by Cerdic in AD 530, but was passed to his relatives Stuf and Wightar upon his death four years later. Cynric is said to have fought at Old Sarum in AD 552, and possibly at Barbury Castle on the Marlborough Downs with Ceawlin in 556. Bede – whose source in this context was his contemporary, Bishop Daniel of Winchester – appears to contradict the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* by indicating that southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight did not come under West Saxon rule until their conquest by King Cædwalla in the late AD 680s. Bede and Asser refer to the founders and people of the kingdom of Wight as Jutes, and place-name evidence seems to support this,²⁷ although this may reflect the later development of a 'Jutish' identity within this area, regardless of the ethnic origins of its inhabitants.²⁸

Such accounts of the kingdom's origins are obscure and are certainly largely founded in legend and mythology. The location names, from which the names of the legendary characters are derived, and the idea of a small group of ships landing on the shoreline, are particularly resonant with Germanic foundation myths based in oral traditions, such as the legend of Hengist and Horsa.²⁹ Some of the most obviously fabricated names, such as 'Port' – a figure said to have landed at *Portesmuþa* (Portsmouth) in AD 501 and to have fought a battle with 'noble Britons'³⁰ – are clearly the product of later attempts at forming an etymological link with impor-

²⁵ Aston and Lewis 1994, 1; Yorke 1995, 1.

²⁶ Dumville 1985; 1986.

²⁷ Yorke 1989b, 89–92; 1995, 36–9.

²⁸ Hills 1979, 316.

²⁹ Howe 1989; Yorke 1995, 33.

³⁰ Cunliffe 1993, 278.

tant places in the landscape, and emphasise the legendary nature of the tales. It is interesting, then, that the names Cerdic and Cædwalla are anglicised versions of British names, while the name Cenwalh also points to a British connection.³¹ This is perhaps indicative of attempts to forge a common identity.

On the basis of sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, historians have traditionally believed, therefore, that the emergence of Wessex began in southern Hampshire, perhaps in the Winchester area. It is now generally accepted, however, that the West Saxon kingdom emerged as an amalgam of what appear to have been twin clusters of population and power: one in the Hampshire area and the other in the Upper Thames region.³² Bede refers to the people of Ceawlin, the first West Saxon king, and the seventh-century king Cynegils, as *Gewissae* or *Gewisse*, a group whose territory lay in the Upper Thames valley, where the most intensive fifth-century evidence in the region that would later become Wessex has been located. That this was an affluent area is indicated by the presence of 'princely' burials dating to the late sixth century and other finds of prestige or 'exotic' goods.³³ Dorchester-on-Thames would be chosen as the site of the first West Saxon see or bishopric in the second quarter of the seventh century, and a number of high-status finds have been recovered from the town.³⁴

In the sixth century, the material cultural character of cemeteries at Fairford, Lechlade and Kemble suggests to a certain extent that the *Gewisse* 'branched out' westwards along the Thames valley.³⁵ By the end of this century, however, Mercian power was in ascendance, culminating in a victory against the *Gewisse* for the control of the Hwicce of Gloucestershire in AD 628. The *Gewisse* are said to have allied themselves with the Northumbrians, adversaries of Mercia, perhaps intensifying the antagonism between the two kingdoms. Mercian activity in Gloucestershire forced the *Gewisse* southwards, and the Salisbury Avon valley is thought to have come under *Gewissan* control by the end of the sixth century, enabling expansion into western Wiltshire and Dorset. The conquest of Somerset came comparatively late, and began (according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) with two key battles: Bradford-on-Avon in AD 652 and *Peonnum* in 658. The latter was identified in the nineteenth century as Penselwood, near the convergence of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire,³⁶ although several other possible locations have been proposed.³⁷ Cenwalh became the first West Saxon patron of Sherborne (Dorset), and Malmesbury (Wiltshire) and Glastonbury (Somerset) are recorded in charters dating from the reign of Centwine (AD 676–85). Exeter was part of the West Saxon kingdom by AD 680, according to *The Life of St Boniface*.³⁸ Much of Wessex was under *Gewissan* control by the time Ine came to the throne in AD 688, with the exception of Devon, which continued to be controlled to varying extents by Dumnonia through the eighth century.³⁹

³¹ Yorke 1990, 138–9.

³² Hamerow *et al.* 2013, 49; Clay 2013.

³³ Yorke 1990, 132.

³⁴ Yorke 1995, 34.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁶ Kerslake 1876.

³⁷ Cf. Hoskins 1960; Barker 1986.

³⁸ Yorke 1995, 60.

³⁹ Higham 2008.

Winchester became rapidly established as the major West Saxon centre of power, arguably in part owing to its strategic position for Gewissan expansion into the 'Jutish' provinces, which was urgently needed in order to prevent further encroachment from the South Saxons (Mercian allies) to the east. King Cædwalla ensured the conquest of the 'Jutish' area in the AD 680s, becoming overlord of the South and East Saxons. He also ruled Surrey and the South Saxons, but only the 'Jutish' kingdoms and the *Basingas* remained Gewissan throughout the eighth century. Only by the second half of the eighth century were the kings conferred the title 'West Saxon', once their territories had expanded more considerably.⁴⁰ Rivalry between Wessex and Mercia appears to have lasted well into the ninth century, and any conquests made by the West Saxons must be viewed as opportunistic developments, rather than as part of a calculated or inevitable process of expansion.⁴¹

Building a picture of the burial record: methods and sources

At the core of this book is a new and comprehensive gazetteer of all burial sites dating from c. AD 450–850 across the four counties, compiled by the author between 2011 and 2017 through the first-hand consultation of information held by the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE)⁴² and local authority Historic Environment Records (HERs), and a range of published and unpublished sources.⁴³ The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) online database was also trawled at researcher level to locate find-spots of burial-indicative artefactual evidence such as weapons and jewellery. Although human remains may not have been recovered, clusters of two or more artefacts often deposited as grave-goods, such as certain types of jewellery item or weapon, in a small area may indicate a burial or cemetery. The decision was taken, however, not to include such sites in the dataset owing to the lack of definitive evidence for burial. The final dataset comprises records for a total of 216 cemeteries and burial sites, information on which can be found in the Appendix at the end of this book.

In the initial data collection stage it was necessary to consider with a critical eye the information contained within existing gazetteers, especially those published some time ago. Audrey Meaney's catalogue,⁴⁴ for example, lists numerous burials found without grave-goods, many of which may have been misidentified by antiquarian excavators; some relate to hearsay accounts and others are unlocated.⁴⁵ Careful scrutiny of the interpretations provided by the authors of exca-

⁴⁰ Yorke 1989b, 93–4; 1995, 34.

⁴¹ Higham 2008, 27.

⁴² Formerly known as the National Monuments Record (NMR).

⁴³ These sources include existing published and unpublished gazetteers such as those contained within Grinsell 1957; Meaney 1964; Geake 1997; Semple 2003; Cherryson 2005b; Draper 2006, Appendix 2; and Reynolds 2009. Sue Harrington also kindly granted access to her database compiled as part of the *Beyond the Tribal Hidage* project; this was consulted in the latter stages of data refinement for this book in order to verify information already gathered.

⁴⁴ Meaney 1964.

⁴⁵ Draper 2004, 56.

vation reports or accounts – especially those produced before the twentieth century – was also vital, since these may have been influenced by their own preconceptions or by the prevailing opinions of the time. Findings relating to sites excavated prior to the advent of modern fieldwork techniques often needed to be revised and reconsidered in the light of advances in archaeological theory and practice.

The data refinement stage involved discounting any burial sites deemed too ambiguous or which lacked sufficient information for accurate dating. In order to be included in the dataset, one or more of the following criteria had to apply:

- i. The presence of burial-indicative artefacts datable to the period of study, in or close to a certain or probable grave.
- ii. The presence of human remains (or, in the case of soils that result in poor bone preservation, the presence of a clearly distinguishable grave-cut), together with characteristic features of burial during the period of study.
- iii. The presence of an intrusive burial within an earlier burial mound, which could reasonably be interpreted – for example, through stratigraphic evidence – as early medieval. It was, however, important to bear in mind that the practice of ancient monument reuse is known to have occurred at other times, such as the Romano-British period.⁴⁶

Linking the dataset to a GIS was crucial in enabling the locations of sites to be verified and in facilitating analysis of their landscape context in a multi-scalar way through the integration of a range of other datasets. In addition to the geo-referenced point data representing the individual burial sites, the GIS comprised multiple layers, including the modern and historic county and parish boundaries⁴⁷ and the reconstructed Domesday hundred boundaries.⁴⁸ Known and probable locations of Roman settlements, towns and villas; prehistoric sites; and early medieval settlement and minster sites were also plotted. Digital terrain model mapping provided the backdrop, recreating a dynamic impression of the topography and aiding spatial analysis.

Field visits to key sites (where the reuse of earlier features had been identified) were also critically important, providing insights into the ‘spatial syntax’ of burial sites. Through such visits a first-hand impression could be gained of the nature of the terrain and topography, and intervisibility with other areas of the landscape could be assessed (as it is not always possible to establish this simply by studying two-dimensional maps or photographs). Locations could also be verified with the use of a handheld GPS device and a photographic record of sites and the surrounding landscape could be obtained for reference.

⁴⁶ Williams 1998b; Hutton 2011.

⁴⁷ The digital map of the 1851 parish boundaries (Southall and Burton 2004) was used; and to verify these boundaries, the original ‘electronic map’ upon which this was based (Kain and Oliver 2001) was also consulted, together with first edition OS maps.

⁴⁸ The Domesday hundreds of Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset were digitally mapped by the author based on the printed maps in the Phillimore and Alecto editions of *Domesday Book* (Munby 1982; Thorn 1989a; 1989c; 1991; Thorn and Thorn 1979; 1983). The *Domesday Shires and Hundreds of England* data package (Brookes 2017) was subsequently acquired and was used for the Somerset phase of analysis.

A key documentary source for the contextualisation of burial sites within their surrounding landscape is the land charter. The descriptions of local topography in the boundary clauses of charters, many of which survive for the study area (though predominantly as later transcriptions), are a rich source of information about the setting of burial sites and attest to the visibility and importance of antecedent monuments for contemporary communities. They can be regarded as mnemonics or 'mental maps', used to describe and recount boundaries prior to the advent of cartography. Topographic markers, which may seem ephemeral to the modern reader, were deliberately chosen for their significance and memorable nature. The fact that these texts were written in the vernacular, rather than Latin, demonstrates that they were a well-established and practical way of recalling the boundaries of estates.⁴⁹ In a broader sense, toponyms can reflect communities' complex interactions with their surroundings, and are intimately involved in the formulation and negotiation of identity and 'sense of place'.⁵⁰ Of course, it is important to be mindful of the agency involved in naming and demarcating the land, and that this may not always be the result of egalitarian input but rather the elite imposition of a particular viewpoint.⁵¹

Defining monuments

A recurrent theme of this book is funerary monumentality, and it is worth providing some clarification of what exactly is meant by a 'monument', in relation to both burial rites during the period of study and the remains of the prehistoric and Roman past encountered by early medieval communities. While the term 'monumentality' is used in this book strictly in a funerary context, 'monument' is also sometimes employed in a broader sense to denote any man-made prehistoric or Roman feature which we can reasonably deduce was still visible and significant in the early medieval landscape.

There is undeniably finality and permanence in the act of burial and in the adaptation of the earth to accommodate the deceased. Yet while the careful composition of a grave and the objects displayed within it might communicate a complex and powerful message to those present at the funeral, this can only be relatively transient.⁵² In contrast, above-ground monuments, in funerary contexts, have the capacity to provide an enduring means of conveying information, as much about the deceased as about the identities, beliefs and social relations of the living.⁵³ That fact that the term 'monument' is derived from the Latin *monere*, 'to remind',⁵⁴ highlights the fact that, while such constructions clearly reference the past, they are also manifestly intended for future contemplation. Interpretations of the concept of monuments vary considerably in different disciplines and with respect to differ-

⁴⁹ Howe 2002; Devlin 2007, 46–7.

⁵⁰ Morphy 1995; Basso 1996; Howe 2002; Jones and Semple 2012.

⁵¹ Johnson 2007, 149.

⁵² Halsall 2010.

⁵³ Effros 2003b, 175.

⁵⁴ Bradley 2002a, 122.

ent chronological periods. A key defining characteristic is usually substantial size and conspicuous appearance,⁵⁵ inviting interpretations linked to the enactment of power or authority, or the projection of bold statements relating to a particular ideology. The emergence of new forms of monumentality and funerary rites, usually discussed with reference to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age but similarly applicable to the tenebrous protohistory of the immediate post-Roman period, has been variously attributed to influxes of people or ideas, increasing agricultural sophistication or societal complexity.⁵⁶ It may also be linked to periods of insecurity or rapid change, or to internal or external pressures on land and resources. Memorialisation is often a group activity: monument construction necessitates 'the expenditure of unusual amounts of human energy',⁵⁷ and thus the channelling of resources and the negotiation of collective priorities.

Over the past three decades, the idea that monuments can possess 'biographies', 'life-histories' or 'afterlives' – generated through both human agency and natural forces and recurrently embellished, rewritten and reinterpreted – has become a central trope.⁵⁸ Monuments are meaningful only within the landscape they inhabit, and cannot exist in isolation: they contribute to shaping the landscape around them through their innate properties, as much as they are shaped by their setting and by overlapping and interwoven accumulations of past practices.⁵⁹ The mnemonic qualities of monuments have long been discussed in regard to prehistory⁶⁰ and, more recently, 'technologies of remembrance' (and forgetting) have been recognised in the context of early medieval Britain. Howard Williams was the first to address how 'social memories' were produced and reproduced through burial rites and the materiality of monuments, and how memory and the remembrance of the dead influenced life and death in different communities over the course of the early medieval period.⁶¹ Zoë Devlin has, however, argued that to a certain extent the notion of social and collective memory is flawed, as memory can exist only in the minds of individuals.⁶² As David Wheatley has recently explored, the concept of 'mementos' – or episodic responses provoked by collective amnesia over the *longue durée* – is perhaps more fitting.⁶³

Past work on early medieval monumentality and monument reuse

Reporting on his forays into the earthworks of the Yorkshire Wolds at the turn of the twentieth century, the pioneering early 'rescue archaeologist' John Robert Mortimer was among the first to acknowledge the prevalence of the custom of

⁵⁵ Though see Osborne 2014, 1–3 for a discussion of the validity of the term 'monumental' even for diminutive portable objects.

⁵⁶ Edmonds 1999, 6.

⁵⁷ Bradley 1985, 2.

⁵⁸ Holtorf 1998; Kolen *et al.* 2015.

⁵⁹ Díaz-Guardamino *et al.* 2015.

⁶⁰ E.g. Bradley 1993; Tilley 1994; Edmonds 1999.

⁶¹ Williams 2006.

⁶² Devlin 2007; cf. Foot 1999; Halsall 2010, 251–2.

⁶³ Wheatley 2015.

Anglo-Saxon secondary interment within 'British' barrows.⁶⁴ Mortimer's contemporary and 'rival' William Greenwell had also commented incidentally that 'the occurrence of Saxon burials in the upper parts of British barrows is by no means infrequent. I have myself met with three, and very notable instances'.⁶⁵ In common with other barrow diggers of their epoch, however, both remained relatively indifferent to the ample evidence for this practice and expressed no great curiosity as to the possible motivations behind it. Such was the prevailing attitude up until the second half of the twentieth century; and, when the practice was discussed, the sole explanation considered for the deposition of the dead within pre-existing mounds was practical expediency.⁶⁶ As Leslie Grinsell expounded:

The pagan Saxons frequently buried their dead intrusively in earlier barrows and other earthworks. As long as they got rid of their dead it was of no consequence whether they pushed them into long barrows ... bowl-barrows ... bell-barrows ... disc-barrows ... the Neolithic long mound within Maiden Castle, or even the Romano-British enclosure known as Oliver's Battery above Winchester.⁶⁷

Yet this interpretation is unsatisfactory, not least because individuals buried within barrows – whether primary or secondary – are frequently accompanied by objects suggestive of considerable material wealth and status.⁶⁸ The construction of monuments such as earthen barrows in past societies is argued to have involved the expenditure of significant amounts of labour, perhaps requiring the participation of the entire community and thus reaffirming social hierarchies.⁶⁹ The investment of effort required to *adapt* above-ground monuments for secondary burial must also have been considerable.⁷⁰

How the past was perceived and reinvented was integral to the construction of identities in pre-modern societies,⁷¹ and it is increasingly apparent that early medieval communities knowingly drew upon symbols of the past to define their position in the world. In his seminal discussion of the 'striking juxtaposition of prehistoric and early medieval monuments' at Yeavering, Northumberland, Richard Bradley introduced the idea that monument reuse could have represented an intentional and calculated strategy in Anglo-Saxon England.⁷² He argued that, far from being indicative of 'ritual continuity' – as had originally been proposed by Brian Hope-Taylor,⁷³ excavator of the Yeavering complex – the selective reoccupation and adaptation of this ancient landscape represented an attempt by a social elite to legitimise its status and to justify claims to territory. Fabricating a connection to the ancient world and to mythical ancestors was

⁶⁴ Mortimer 1905.

⁶⁵ Greenwell 1877, 2.

⁶⁶ For example, O'Neill and Grinsell 1960.

⁶⁷ Grinsell 1958, 289.

⁶⁸ Such as the adult female buried with lavish grave-goods within a prehistoric barrow at Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire: see Chapter 2, pp. 70–1.

⁶⁹ Barrett 1994.

⁷⁰ Semple 2003, 74; Williams 2006, 32.

⁷¹ Hobsbawm 1983; Evans 1985; Holtorf 1996; 1997; Bradley 2002b.

⁷² Bradley 1987.

⁷³ Hope-Taylor 1977.

a social and political strategy.⁷⁴ Attempts to harness the power of legendary figures or deities are evident in the genealogies of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and the origin myths recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁷⁵ Ancient monuments provided a tangible material connection to the past and an idealised, liminal space for the creation and negotiation of identities.⁷⁶ Crucially, forging a perceived link with local 'ancestral' groups through associations with enduring physical features in the landscape provided a way for elites in Anglo-Saxon England to stake claims to land, resources and authority.⁷⁷ Semple's study of burial topography on the ostensible Wessex–Mercia frontier in northern Wiltshire demonstrated that prominent earlier landscape features could also be seen in the context of political statements in contested areas.⁷⁸ The reuse of monuments in prominent topographic positions was seen in a similar light by Härke, Lucy and Williams.⁷⁹

Sarah Semple was the first to address in an interdisciplinary way how the ancient informed funerary practices in early medieval society, considering the archaeological, literary, historical and linguistic evidence.⁸⁰ Semple demonstrated that there was growing wariness and superstition surrounding prehistoric sites in the middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period, as such places developed negative connotations. This study was complemented by Reynolds' research into the locations of execution and deviant burials, which also began to be associated with prehistoric monuments from the eighth century onwards, as the use of such sites for burial by the general population declined.⁸¹ Aside from funerary reuse, barrows and other earthworks were also appropriated for other functions. They were frequently used as assembly places or moots,⁸² and, as Vicky Crewe has shown, they were incorporated into Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon settlements.⁸³

The phenomenon of the creation of new funerary monuments in the early medieval period is of course closely connected, but not necessarily equivalent in meaning and significance, to the reuse of existing barrows. Moreover, different forms of monumentality, which should be viewed in their specific historical contexts, emerge over the course of the period. The building of isolated barrow graves in the late sixth and seventh centuries, in contrast with earlier, apparently more 'egalitarian', barrow cemeteries, has been interpreted by Shephard and later by Scull and Stoodley as a response to increasing social stratification.⁸⁴ While Carver has suggested that the rise of monumentality at this time represented an ideological signal in response to political insecurity,⁸⁵ it can also be argued that the construction of large ritual monuments was only possible once a sufficient degree of social

⁷⁴ Williams and Sayer 2009, 4.

⁷⁵ Howe 1989.

⁷⁶ Williams 1997, 25; 2006, 199.

⁷⁷ Geake 1992; Lucy 1992; Williams 1997, 26; Howe 2002; Brookes 2007b.

⁷⁸ Semple 2003.

⁷⁹ Härke, in Fulford and Rippon 1994; Lucy 1998; Williams 1998b.

⁸⁰ Semple 1998.

⁸¹ Reynolds, A. 1998.

⁸² Pantos 2004; Semple 2004.

⁸³ Crewe 2012.

⁸⁴ Shephard 1979a; 1979b; Scull 1999; Stoodley 1999.

⁸⁵ Carver 2001; 2002.

and cultural development – in a relatively stable though still dynamic form – had been achieved.⁸⁶

Both Carver and Van de Noort have proposed religious motivations for the upsurge in richly furnished barrow burial around the end of the sixth century, arguing that it represented a conspicuous and ostentatious display of paganism in response to the growing power of Roman Christianity.⁸⁷ It is, however, important to be mindful that barrow burial and, at least initially, furnished rites may not have been regarded as explicitly ‘pagan’ practices, and there is substantial evidence to suggest that burial in barrows continued to represent a viable and desirable alternative to churchyard burial even post-conversion.⁸⁸ Moreover, as Carver has himself recently advised, the dividing line between paganism and Christianity is likely to have been somewhat fluid at this time, as neither religion was formally institutionalised; rather, paganism and Christianity were ‘two hands of the same persona’, and there was ‘considerable interdigitation between the two’.⁸⁹

We can now benefit from a substantial and stimulating body of work on the early medieval funerary landscapes of Britain and north-west Europe.⁹⁰ For the most part, this scholarship has been regionally circumscribed in scale and focus. Indeed, this research tradition could be criticised for being too restrictive in its outlook: it is of course vital to avoid insularity and to seek the bigger picture – whether at a supra-regional or broader European level. Yet a regional approach, such as that taken in this book, has the potential to be intensely rewarding. The existing corpus of regional studies has revealed clear commonalities in terms of how disparate populations responded to their respective surroundings in funerary contexts – a preference for barrows, sites close to boundaries or routeways, and a trend towards isolated burial from the late sixth century AD – intimating and reflecting a more global trajectory of social change underlying the regional mosaic. But, equally, this work serves to convey the importance of *specific context* in illuminating subtleties and variations from place to place. It encourages us, moreover, to be alert to the strong influence of the physical environment, agrarian regimes and the history of archaeological investigation upon apparent patterns, as we shall see in the following chapter. It is my intention to show that by employing a holistic, micro-topographical approach and through detailed and comprehensive examination of the funerary evidence from a single, discrete area of southern England, it is possible to elicit a nuanced understanding of the ways in which early medieval communities harnessed and shaped their inherited landscape.

⁸⁶ Blair 1995, 21.

⁸⁷ Van de Noort 1993; Carver 2001.

⁸⁸ Geake 1992; Welch 2011, 274.

⁸⁹ Carver 2010.

⁹⁰ For example: Petts 2000 for western Britain; Semple 2013 for England (and 2008 for West Sussex); Lucy 1998 for East Yorkshire; Brookes 2007a–b for Kent; Driscoll 1998 and Maldonado 2013 for Scotland; O’Brien 2009 for Ireland; Effros 2001 and Halsall 2010 for France; and Thäte 2007 for Scandinavia and Germany.

Monument Reuse and the Inherited Landscape

Early medieval communities in Wessex inhabited a landscape that bore conspicuous traces of the ways in which their prehistoric and Roman predecessors had ordered and managed the environment. Ancient trackways followed the natural contours of the terrain and linear Roman roads cut across the grain of the landscape. The region was littered with the masonry of Roman villas and civic buildings that had been abandoned and left to decay. Upstanding funerary mounds, ceremonial stone alignments and banks and ditches in low relief punctuated the upland. The survival and visibility of these vestiges of past societies was of course locally variable, determined to a large extent by the underlying geology and by the intensity and nature of land exploitation regimes. On the great expanses of calcareous grassland that prevailed across the central belt of the region, an abundance of prehistoric earthworks had been preserved by virtue of the endurance of pastoral land use.¹ Yet, even in areas of the chalk downland where arable farming was practised, certain monuments seem to have been actively avoided and protected from damage by Iron Age and Romano-British cultivators.² Was such a desire to conserve and curate ancient sites shared by early medieval populations?

In this chapter I seek to understand how relict features became incorporated into the praxis of landscape use during the four centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire. I explore the significance of different categories of ancient monument in the mortuary practices of early medieval Wessex and interrogate any identifiable sub-regional patterns in monument reuse.³ I shall start, however, by exploring the ways in which the natural environment affected the locations of early medieval burial and settlement sites, and how such distributions may have become distorted by the history of archaeological investigation and by human activity in the intervening period. A critical understanding of the processes that influenced both the early medieval landscape itself, and our own twenty-first-century view of that landscape, is key to determining the validity of any trends we identify.

The physical environment and the archaeological record

As outlined in the Introduction, the Wessex region encompasses a diversity of landscape character areas, or *pays*, that bear witness to the constant process of negotiation between societies and land.⁴ Inherent variations in geology, pedology,

¹ Fowler 2000b.

² Chadburn and Corney 2001, 45–6.

³ Many of the sites mentioned in passing in this review will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters of this book.

⁴ Roberts and Wrathmell 2000, 33.

Table 2. Numbers and proportions of Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites associated with different geological formations.

Bedrock geology	Number of sites	Percentage
Chalk Group	149	69.0
Bracklesham Group	21	9.7
Penarth Group	8	3.7
Mercia Mudstone Group	6	2.8
Lias Group	5	2.3
Selborne Group	5	2.3
Corallian Group	4	1.9
Thames Group	4	1.9
Ancholme Group	4	1.9
Great Oolite Group	3	1.4
Inferior Oolite Group	2	0.9
Exmoor Group	1	0.5
Lambeth Group	1	0.5
Pembroke Limestone Group	1	0.5
Purbeck Group	1	0.5
Sherwood Sandstone Group	1	0.5

topography and access to natural resources exerted a strong influence on communities' experience of their surroundings and helped shape patterns of settlement and burial. Early medieval society was intensely rooted in farming, driven both by live-stock and their basic requirements and by the capacity of the land to provide consistent harvests.⁵ This, in turn, influenced where people settled, how they moved around, and how they perceived and defined their territories. We must equally recognise that differences in landscape character have a propensity to generate biases in the archaeological record and to create the *impression* of particular trends. It is hard to overstate, for example, the influence of geology on the distribution of archaeological sites. Despite the fact that chalk bedrock underlies less than a third of the total land area of the four counties,⁶ a striking 69 per cent of the 216 Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites identified in the study region are located on this geology (Table 2; Figure 3). If we take only those burial sites that directly reuse earlier features, an even higher proportion (82.4 per cent) are on chalk geology. While this apparent pre-eminence of the chalklands in the mortuary topography of Wessex in the fifth to ninth centuries partly reflects contemporary early medieval patterns of settlement and land use, the correlation is also heavily influenced by taphonomic factors and patterns of archaeological investigation.

⁵ Banham and Faith 2014.

⁶ Chalk Group geology underlies c. 4570km² (32.5 per cent) of the historic counties of Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset and Somerset, which cover a total combined area of c.14,080km² (calculated based on mapping by Southall and Burton 2004).



Figure 3. Chalk geology and the distribution of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites.

Chalk bedrock, particularly the formation known as White Chalk (formerly Upper Chalk), typically gives rise to thin, well-drained soils conducive to the formation of cropmarks and differential marks over buried features during periods of aridity, facilitating the identification of archaeological sites. Calcareous soils also tend to be particularly good at preserving human skeletal material. Archaeologically favourable conditions do not occur in all chalk areas, however; where the bedrock is capped by clay-with-flints deposits, conversely, archaeological features are difficult to identify and higher levels of soil acidity accelerate the degradation of human bone and metalwork.⁷ Moreover, clay-with-flints areas are often densely wooded,⁸ preventing the identification of features through aerial reconnaissance, with the exception of Lidar.

The superior preservation of archaeological features on the chalk downland also partially reflects the fact that the fertility of thin calcareous soils is quickly exhausted; this, in turn, has contributed to the predominance of pastoral land use in such areas since the Romano-British period or earlier.⁹ An aggressive programme of deep ploughing and agricultural 'improvement' of the downland carried out in the twentieth century had a detrimental effect on the condition and survival of many archaeological monuments. Mercifully though, such intensive arable regimes were not implemented throughout the Wessex downland and, in general, land use has been favourable to preservation. In the archetypal multi-period landscape of Salisbury Plain, the 'archaeological remains of several millennia of human activity' owe their

⁷ Fern and Stoodley 2003.

⁸ Everitt 1985, 74.

⁹ Groube and Bowden 1982, 48.

continued survival to the military ownership of the land since the late nineteenth century.¹⁰ The sheer density of upstanding prehistoric and Roman monuments here had previously attracted the attention of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarian investigators, who made the expanse of downland their 'stamping ground'.¹¹ The discovery of Anglo-Saxon intrusive burials within such monuments was an unintended consequence of this highly targeted investigation method, which has contributed to a bias in the distribution of burial sites, as well as producing an 'enhanced view of monument reuse, specifically the use of barrows for early medieval burial'.¹²

Another environmental factor that has had a significant impact on Anglo-Saxon settlement and burial patterns is hydrology.¹³ Rivers were of fundamental practical importance for early medieval communities, offering a continuous supply of water for people and livestock, in contrast to an unpredictable and often seasonal supply on the downland. Moreover, river valleys afforded access to plentiful resources such as reeds and gravels, and grassland for cattle grazing and hay making. Waterways, in conjunction with fording places, such as the crossing at Abbots Worthy referenced in an early ninth-century boundary clause,¹⁴ also formed natural communication corridors. The correlation between Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon funerary activity and waterways is particularly striking in the historic county of Hampshire, where 86 per cent of known burial sites are located within 1km of a floodplain (Figure 4).¹⁵ We should, of course, be mindful of the influence of the archaeological investigation history here; the high concentration of modern archaeological interventions and discoveries in the river valleys does, to a certain extent, reflect the enduringly riverine settlement pattern of the county (Figure 5). The scarcity of known burial sites on the elevated Hampshire Downs also accounts for the low number of sites at any great distance from floodplains, as it is only in these areas that permanent watercourses are absent. The fact that so many Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites have been revealed through development in the modern cities of Winchester and Southampton – built on alluvial, river terrace and tidal flat deposits – is also likely to have distorted the figures.

Leaving aside the inherent biases in the archaeological record, it is an inescapable fact that the majority of known fifth- to early eighth-century cemeteries and settlements in Hampshire are located in the river valleys. Closer examination of the spatial dynamics of this activity reveals that the settlements are consistently situated closer to the rivers and at lower altitudes than the burial sites. At Micheldever in the Dever valley, for example, two sixth-century sunken-featured buildings were found within 50m of the river on the 75m contour,¹⁶ while 1km to the west the fifth- to seventh-century mixed-rite cemetery at Weston Colley lay 350m from the river on an elevated spur (Figure 6).¹⁷ Similar cemetery–settlement pairings are found in

¹⁰ McOmish *et al.* 2002.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² Semple 2013, 226.

¹³ Cf. Williamson 2013, 184–93; Brookes 2007b; Everitt 1986, 46; Semple 2013, 25.

¹⁴ S273.

¹⁵ Floodplains are defined here as areas with superficial alluvial, river terrace or tidal flat deposits, or zones highlighted in the *Historic Flood Map* (Environment Agency 2016).

¹⁶ Johnston 1998.

¹⁷ Fern and Stoodley 2003.

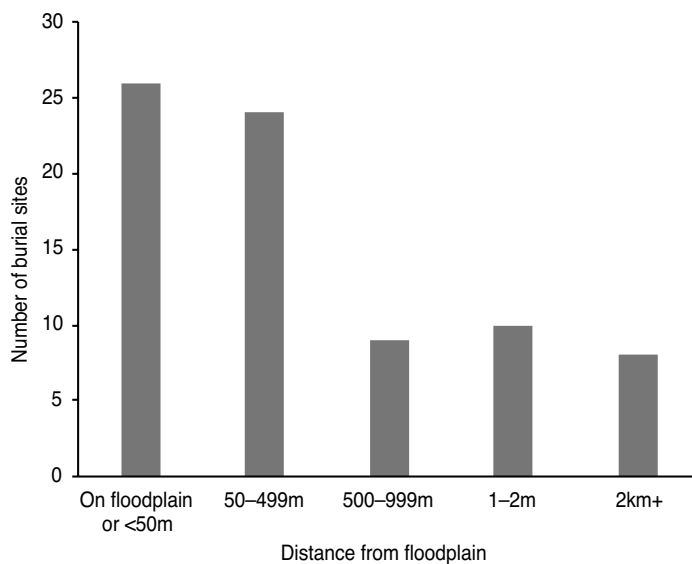


Figure 4. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites and distance from floodplains in Hampshire.

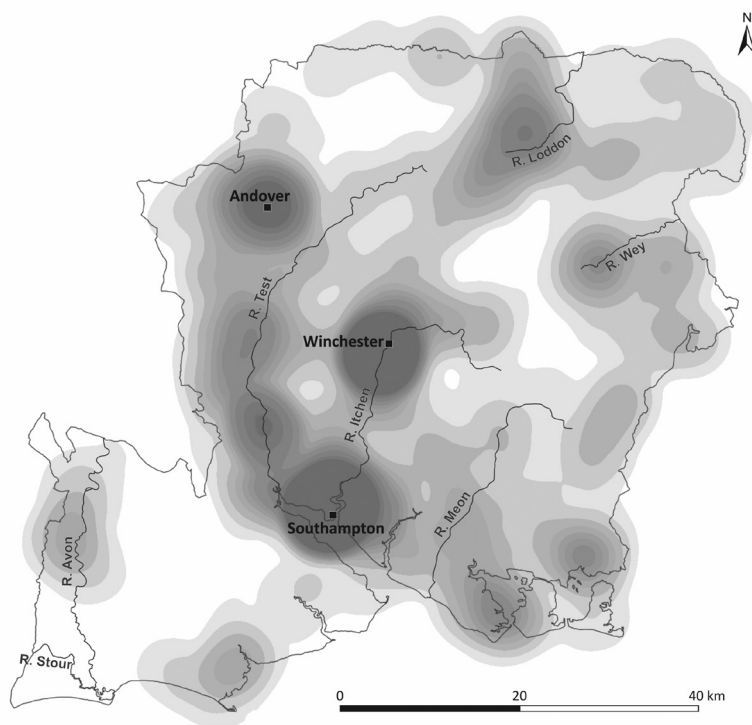


Figure 5. Kernel density analysis of modern archaeological investigations in Hampshire.

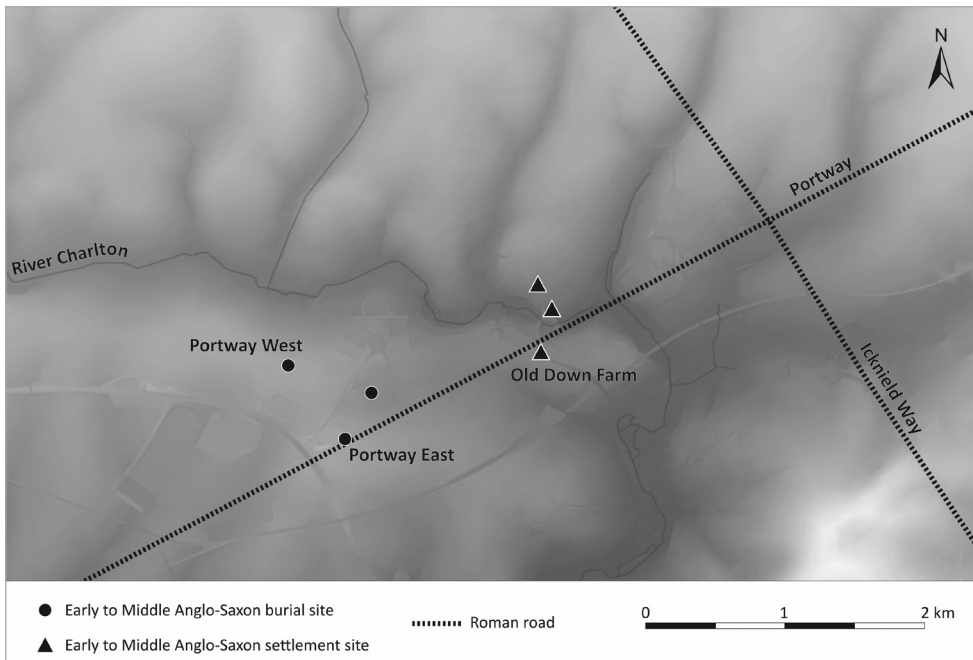


Figure 6. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries in the Charlton valley, Hampshire.

nearly all the river valleys in the central and northern part of the county, including the Wallop, Charlton, Loddon and Wey valleys.

A topographic relationship of this sort can, for example, be observed between the cemetery at Worthy Park and the contemporary settlement at Abbots Worthy in the Itchen valley. Romano-British villas and farmsteads in this area had previously been situated on the downland above the valley, and the settlement shift towards the riverside in the Early Anglo-Saxon period arguably signified a break with past tradition.¹⁸ The idea of a post-Roman or even late Roman settlement shift or retreat from the uplands has been widely acknowledged, and is considered a result of a combination of factors, such as soil degradation and environmental pressures.¹⁹ Yet environmental data from the Abbots Worthy settlement site suggests that mixed farming was practised on a considerable scale during the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period and that the whole range of terrain and land uses were exploited, from hay meadows on the floodplain to grazing on the downland.²⁰ This perhaps indicates that the Roman estate continued to be farmed, and that only the dwelling places moved to the banks of the river.²¹ That this shift took place early on is intimated by the lower valley slope location of Itchen Abbas cemetery, which incorporates late Roman burials.

¹⁸ Hawkes and Grainger 2003, 2–4.

¹⁹ Cf. Welch 1985; Powlesland 1997.

²⁰ Fasham and Whinney 1991, 78.

²¹ Hawkes and Grainger 2003, 4.

What, then, were the motivations for siting the cemeteries above the settlements on the valley slopes? The positioning of burial sites on prominent spurs or slopes in order to maximise visual impact, especially from the perspective of frequently navigated waterways – as epitomised by Sutton Hoo – has been interpreted as a means by which communities or kin groups sought to display territorial control and assert identity.²² Tree cover permitting, cemeteries such as Weston Colley and Worthy Park would, in theory, have been most visible from the valley bottom and the opposite slope, while visual access would have been restricted from more elevated parts of the downland above the cemeteries. It is, however, debatable whether the cemeteries would have been discernible from any great distance, especially as the valley sides are not particularly steep.

Alternatively, it could be speculated that the dead performed a ‘sentinel’ function,²³ overlooking and symbolically protecting the settlement, although, again, the slightness of the slopes and barely appreciable difference in altitude between cemetery and settlement makes this argument less plausible. It is particularly noteworthy that many of these cemeteries are situated alongside drove routes leading up on to the downs. Such locations are likely to have facilitated access and display, and perhaps signalled different communities’ control over the surrounding land and resources.²⁴ The positioning of burial places in the aforementioned river valleys of Hampshire is strikingly reminiscent of the evidence from West Sussex, and we might likewise relate these burial practices to the emergence and consolidation of small, river-centric folk territories, such as that of the *Meonware* (see below, p. 39), during the fifth to seventh centuries.²⁵

On the periphery of the downland, notably on the scarplands of Wiltshire, the interface between the porous chalk and the Upper Greensand gives rise to a spring line, which provided an attractive setting for early medieval settlement.²⁶ Such settlements are found, for example, at the junction of Salisbury Plain and the Vale of Pewsey, and along the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs adjoining the Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt. This linear patterning is identifiable by the time of Domesday and still persists to a great extent today.²⁷ Springs, wells and related water sources were not merely of practical importance; there is also plentiful evidence to suggest that watery places held long-running sacred and spiritual connotations, attracting ritual activity over the *longue durée* (see Chapter 2).

Categories of monument reuse: geographical and temporal trends

Over half (52.8 per cent) of the 216 Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites in the study region were found to be directly associated with at least one element of the prehistoric or Roman landscape, while 81.5 per cent were located within 300m

²² For example, Williams 1999b; Semple 2003; 2013, 24.

²³ Cf. O’Brien 1999.

²⁴ Brookes 2007a; 2007b, 149. These arguments will be explored further in Chapter 4.

²⁵ Semple 2013, 23–6.

²⁶ Lewis 1994; Williamson 2013.

²⁷ Darby 1986, 42–3.

Table 3. Proportions represented by different categories of reused feature, and numbers of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites associated with different sub-categories of feature.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage of all reused features</i>	<i>Sub-category</i>	<i>Number of burial sites directly associated</i>	<i>Number of burial sites indirectly associated</i>
Funerary and ritual monuments	46.2	Round barrow	49	31
		Long barrow	11	10
		Cemetery/burials	10	3
		Double barrow	2	–
		Henge	2	–
		Bank barrow	1	–
		Megalithic monument	1	–
Non-funerary earthworks and settlement features	31.2	Settlement/enclosure	18	12
		Linear earthwork/ditch	14	4
		Field system	10	10
		Hillfort	5	8
Roman buildings	11.5	Other built structure	9	6
		Temple	4	2
		Villa	2	3
		Agricultural building	2	–
		Mausoleum	1	–
		Fort	–	1
		Aqueduct	–	2
Routeways	10.4	Roman road	10	14
		Trackway	2	1

of such a feature (directly or indirectly associated). I define direct association as burials cut into, or placed within 50m of, an earlier feature, and indirect association as burials within 300m of an earlier feature. In all cases, these features were judged to have been discernible at the time the burial was made. A wide range of features were appropriated (Table 3), and we must investigate whether this was simply a case of using what was available or whether certain monuments were consciously selected, perhaps because they served the particular needs of communities and social groups within their local area. It is thus helpful to categorise these antecedent features in order to aid the identification of typological and geographical patterns in monument reuse.

Unsurprisingly, the most commonly reused types of feature comprise ‘funerary or ritual monuments’, accounting for nearly half (46.2 per cent) of all features appropriated for Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial (Table 3; Figure 7). Yet a variety of other types of monument were reused, including ‘non-funerary earthworks and settlements’, which account for nearly a third (31.2 per cent) of the reused features.

Monument Reuse and the Inherited Landscape

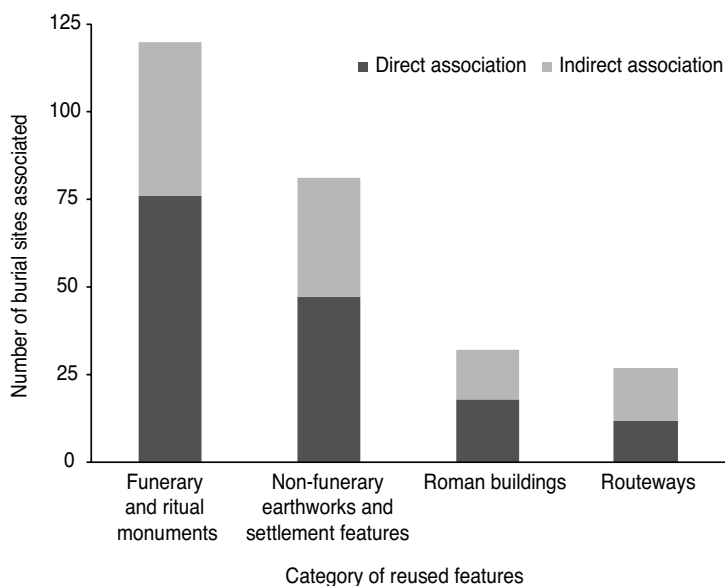


Figure 7. Categories and sub-categories of prehistoric and Roman features associated with Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites in the study area.

Over a tenth (11.5 per cent) of the reused features are in the 'Roman buildings' category; a similar proportion (10.4 per cent) fall within the 'routeways' category.

Funerary and ritual monuments

Given that much scholarly enquiry into Anglo-Saxon monument reuse over the past two decades has been concerned with the reuse of Bronze Age barrows,²⁸ it comes as little surprise that this type of monument plays a prominent role in the mortuary topography of early medieval Wessex. Indeed, Howard Williams' national survey found that prehistoric round barrows represented the most frequently reused form of monument overall, and accounted for just under 60 per cent of occurrences of reuse in his Wessex sample.²⁹ In the present corpus, round barrows account for just 30.8 per cent of incidences of reuse, but still represent by far the largest sub-category of reused monuments. Nearly a quarter (22.7 per cent) of all Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites in the study area are directly associated with a prehistoric or Roman round barrow; 14.4 per cent are indirectly associated. This includes both isolated burials placed in or adjacent to existing barrows, and cemeteries which incorporate these monuments. Many of the former group are antiquarian discoveries and as such are often poorly recorded and provenanced. Fortunately, the majority of the cemetery sites have been excavated to modern standards, improving the reliability of their dating and interpretation.

²⁸ Including, but not limited to, Bradley 1987; Lucy 1992; Williams 1997; 1998a; Semple 1998.

²⁹ Williams 1997.

The integration of ancient round barrows into 'community' cemeteries is an enduring phenomenon, which emerges – or, perhaps more accurately, re-emerges – in Wessex in the fifth century and persists well into the eighth century, if not later. The earliest known example is the group of eighty-five fifth- to sixth-century inhumations focused around a pond barrow (within a potentially more extensive prehistoric barrow cemetery) at Winterbourne Gunner in the Bourne valley, Wiltshire. Parallels have been drawn between this site and the recently excavated cemetery of at least seventy-two graves, of predominantly sixth-century date, dug into a bell barrow within a wider prehistoric ritual landscape at Barrow Clump on Salisbury Plain (see below, pp. 31–3). The Salisbury Avon valley and wider South Wiltshire Downs area is the 'core' zone for this Early Anglo-Saxon tradition of communal barrow burial. Artefactual evidence recovered predominantly from cemeteries suggests that this area was particularly well connected, provincially as well as with the wider area,³⁰ and may be seen as a 'melting pot' for the formation of new identities in the post-Roman period. Funerary customs categorised as 'Anglo-Saxon' became rapidly established here, perhaps owing to a comparatively dense population distribution (apparent from the demography of burial sites despite the elusiveness of early settlement evidence) consisting of relatively mobile and outward-looking kin groups, in turn facilitating the transfer and exchange of ideas.³¹ The incorporation of antecedent monuments into cemeteries was a key part of forging new funerary identities in this area. The Meon valley in Hampshire, and Cranborne Chase in Dorset and into south-west Wiltshire, can be considered 'outliers' with regard to this practice, being later in date and characterised by associative, rather than intrusive, burials.

Smaller groups of intrusive barrow burials are found over a wide geographical area and broad chronological time frame, from the sixth-century burials alongside the Salisbury Avon at Breamore in Hampshire, and at Overton Hill on the Marlborough Downs (see below, pp. 33–7), to the seventh- to tenth-century group on Eggardon Hill in west Dorset. Isolated individual barrow burials, meanwhile, occupy a wide variety of topographic positions, but are commonly associated with significant divisions in the landscape, such as watersheds, parish boundaries or routeways. Burials of this type are found almost exclusively on the chalk downland of Salisbury Plain, the Marlborough Downs, the South Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase. Although dating is often vague, the practice is manifestly a feature of the late sixth to late seventh centuries.³²

While 52.2 per cent of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites in Dorset (twelve of twenty-three sites), and 41.1 per cent of those in Wiltshire (thirty-nine of ninety-five sites), are directly associated with an earlier barrow or barrows, the figure is just 13.9 per cent for Hampshire (ten of seventy-two sites) and 3.8 per cent for Somerset (one probable example – Buckland Dinham – out of twenty-six sites). There are, admittedly, fewer known barrows in the latter two counties than elsewhere, even though they are the largest in terms of land area.³³ Nevertheless,

³⁰ Ulmschneider 1999; 2003.

³¹ Eagles 2001, 201.

³² Williams 1997; Lucy 1998; Semple 2003.

³³ There are c. 500 recorded barrows in Somerset, c. 1100 in Hampshire, c. 1500 in Dorset and c. 2000 in Wiltshire (based on PastScape and HER data).

only c. 0.4 per cent of known barrows in Somerset and c. 0.6 per cent of those in Hampshire are associated with an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial site, compared to c. 2 per cent for Wiltshire and c. 1 per cent for Dorset.

The near absence in Hampshire of the isolated high-status secondary barrow burials that are so prevalent in Wiltshire has been previously noted by Nick Stoodley,³⁴ and is substantiated by the present study. The archaeological investigation history, as well as the distribution of the monuments themselves, may go some way to explaining this imbalance. In the early years of antiquarianism, the upstanding Bronze Age earthworks of Hampshire attracted less attention than those of Wiltshire or Dorset, or at least yielded less spectacular finds and less comprehensive reporting.³⁵ There is, in fact, a noticeable absence of barrows in the eastern part of the high Hampshire Downs, defined as 'wooded downland plateau', where tree cover and low agricultural potential may have precluded settlement until at least the Late Anglo-Saxon period. The excavators Stephen and John Parker, who, under the direction of William Cunnington senior, investigated over 400 Wiltshire barrows between 1795 and 1810, made only a minor foray into this county.³⁶ The absence of a tradition of antiquarian barrow-digging in this part of Wessex naturally means that a smaller proportion of barrows have been investigated here, although a good number display depressions or mutilations that may be evidence of unrecorded amateur excavations.³⁷ Numerous round barrows in the New Forest were excavated in the 1940s by Stuart Piggott, but no evidence of early medieval activity was identified.³⁸

Round barrows occur in a variety of profiles and dimensions, and several schemes of classification according to morphological characteristics have been devised (Figure 8).³⁹ The most common style is the bowl barrow, while more complex forms – bell barrows, pond barrows, disc barrows and saucer barrows – are denominated 'fancy' barrows.⁴⁰ In the field, it can be difficult to differentiate between the latter three types of barrow, all of which are characterised by a central enclosed space, which may have formed the focus for a range of funerary and non-funerary activity in prehistory.⁴¹ Hampshire is considered to lack major concentrations of these more elaborate barrows that frequently overlie Beaker or 'Wessex' burials, with only nineteen disc barrows, compared to 100 in Wiltshire; and around thirty bell barrows, compared to 140 in Wiltshire, listed by Grinsell.⁴² Analysing the types of round barrow appropriated by early medieval communities, in their specific landscape context, can help us to determine whether subtle differences in morphology and appearance influenced the choice of a particular mound.

Let us commence by examining the evidence from Wiltshire, as the county provides a convenient and self-contained – if arguably somewhat arbitrary – unit of

³⁴ Stoodley 2010, 51.

³⁵ Grinsell 1938–40.

³⁶ Everill 2012.

³⁷ Grinsell 1938–40, 349.

³⁸ Piggott 1943.

³⁹ Hoare 1812, 21–2; Grinsell 1957; Ashbee 1960.

⁴⁰ Jones and Quinnell 2014.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 339–40, 43.

⁴² Grinsell 1938–40; 1984.

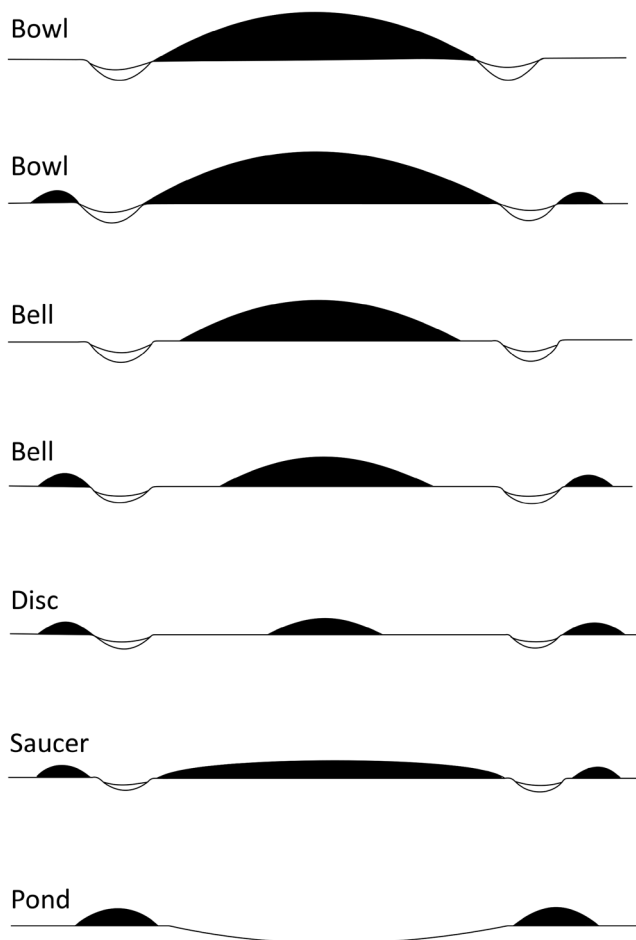


Figure 8. Schematic profiles of different types of round barrow (after Megaw and Simpson 1979, 210).

analysis. Moreover, it is only in this county that data on the reuse of a wide range of round barrow types for early medieval burial are available. Outside the Wiltshire downland, meanwhile, the common bowl barrow is the only round barrow type to display evidence of early medieval reuse. Extensive damage caused by medieval and post-medieval cultivation has, however, created problems of identification and categorisation. At an approximate figure of 1600, bowl barrows account for around 76 per cent of all known barrows in Wiltshire. The number of bowl barrows directly reused for Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial does not, however, reflect this high percentage. Despite being the most commonly reused type of funerary mound in Wiltshire, with fifteen examples of direct association with early medieval burials and ten instances of indirect association, this barrow type still represents only just over half (51 per cent) of appropriated barrows. Of the c. 1600 bowl barrows listed in the Wiltshire and Swindon HER, only about a quarter are recorded as having been excavated and recorded. Those bowl barrows that have been the subject of

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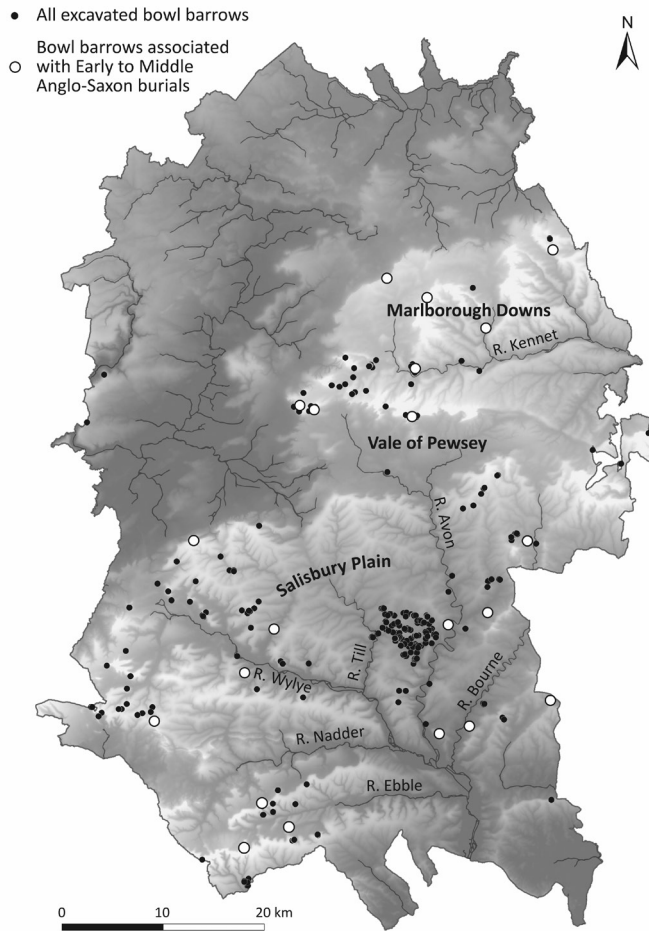


Figure 9. The distribution of excavated bowl barrows in Wiltshire and those associated with Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites.

archaeological intervention are densely clustered in certain zones, notably the downland between the Rivers Till and Avon, in the intensively studied Stonehenge Landscape (Figure 9). Those associated with early medieval burials, however, are fairly evenly distributed throughout the southern and eastern areas of the county.

The proportions of appropriated barrows represented by disc, pond and saucer barrows generally reflect the prevalence of these barrows in Wiltshire overall. Certain other types of barrow, though, seem to be disproportionately well represented. While Roman barrows represent only 0.3 per cent of all barrows in Wiltshire, they constitute 13 per cent of those barrows associated with Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burials. Long barrows also make up 13 per cent of barrows of known type appropriated for early medieval burial, despite constituting only 6 per cent of all barrows in the county overall. Ten per cent of the barrows reused during the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period were bell barrows, yet this type of barrow accounts for only 7 per cent of all barrows in the county.

Burial, Landscape and Identity in Early Medieval Wessex

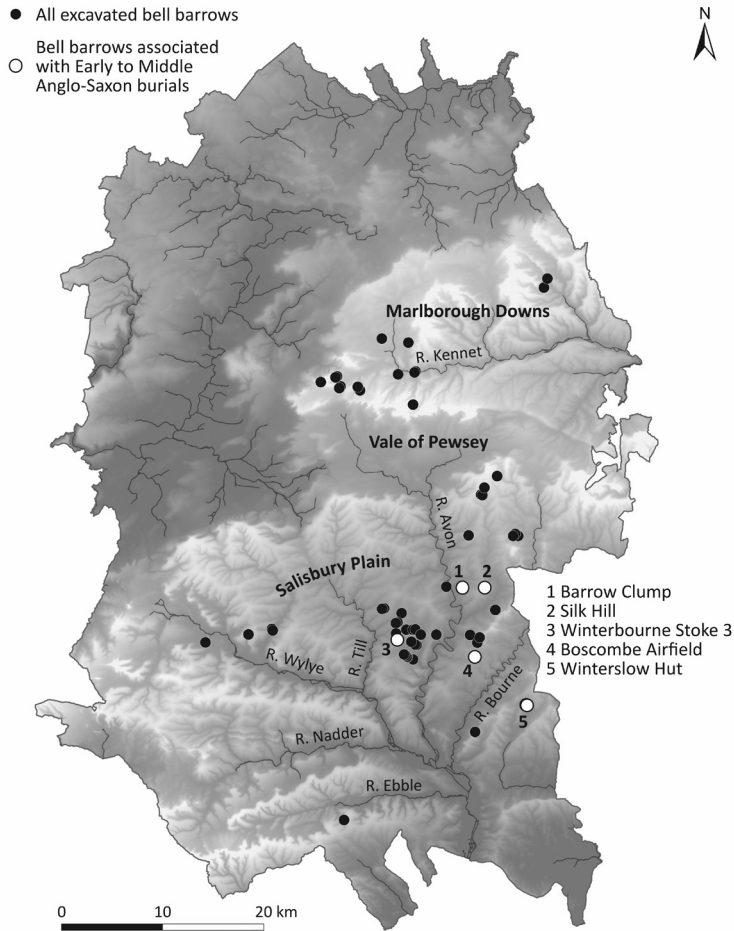


Figure 10. The distribution of excavated bell barrows in Wiltshire and those associated with Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites.

Although there is a degree of bias in the distribution of bell barrows towards the eastern half of Wiltshire, barrows of this type have been identified and excavated throughout the county. Conversely, bell barrows with evidence for early medieval funerary reuse are grouped in discrete geographical areas, notably in the Salisbury Plain *pays*, particularly on the ridges between the Till, Avon and Bourne valleys (Figure 10). On Silk Hill, Milston, to the east of the Avon, a bell barrow was excavated in the early nineteenth century by Colt Hoare, who described it as ‘the loftiest and most conspicuous tumulus on the hill’.⁴³ It was found to contain an inhumation, thought to be intrusive, accompanied by a spearhead, probably dating from the fifth or sixth century. Three further skeletons were reportedly found in 1941 close to the surface of a barrow on Silk Hill, although it is possible that they

⁴³ Hoare 1812, 194.

came from a bowl barrow 250m to the east,⁴⁴ which would imply that more than one mound in the group had been reused. The barrow group sits at 140m aOD on a ridge forming the watershed between the Avon and the Nine Mile River, the latter of which rises at the eastern foot of Silk Hill and joins the Avon at Bulford. The site lies close to the projected line of the *Sorviodunum–Cunetio* Roman road (Margary 44), which possibly corresponds with the modern road marked on the 1:25,000 OS map as 'The Old Marlborough Road'.

On Boscombe Airfield, 7km south of Silk Hill, another bell barrow was found to contain probable secondary interments, accompanied by a socketed spearhead, a bronze belt-hook, iron shears and a small bronze finger ring, when it was levelled in 1930.⁴⁵ The barrow lay at 114m aOD on the boundary between the parishes of Amesbury and Idmiston and the hundreds of Amesbury and Alderbury.

Barrow Clump, Figheldean, is a prime example of the reuse of an unconventional barrow. The unusual morphology of this bell barrow, which encompasses a flat berm of several metres in width to separate the mound from its outer ditch, is likely to have been a significant factor in its selection for funerary appropriation.⁴⁶ This idiosyncrasy, which allowed certain burials to be enclosed in the area between two ring-ditches, may have presented a more fitting burial environment for this particular early medieval community than the more common bowl barrows that bestrew the surrounding landscape. Situated on the break of slope of a gentle spur overlooking the Salisbury Avon valley, 1km east of the river, Barrow Clump is the only extant mound in a group of around twenty former round barrows within an area of c. 135,000m² detected by aerial photography and fluxgate magnetometer survey in 2003 (Figure 11).⁴⁷ While the other barrows in this group have been plough-levelled, Barrow Clump was protected from destruction by virtue of its tree cover and sheer magnitude. It is, however, possible that the bell barrow formed part of a wider funerary locale in the Early Anglo-Saxon period: the geophysical survey detected localised anomalies in and around the ring-ditches of several of the levelled barrows, which may represent intrusive graves.⁴⁸ It is even possible, though doubtful, that some of these may represent primary early medieval barrow burials.

Barrow Clump was originally excavated in the 1890s by Lieutenant-Colonel William Hawley, who found a crouched Beaker burial and four secondary crouched Bronze Age interments.⁴⁹ Although suspicions of much later intrusive interments were raised by the emergence of an iron spearhead from a 'rabbit scrape' in 1935, no further excavations were carried out until 2003–04, when English Heritage instigated a project to investigate the effect of badger damage on ancient monuments. Thirteen Early Anglo-Saxon inhumations in twelve graves were subsequently found in four trenches on the southern and eastern sides of the mound.⁵⁰ Sixty further graves, together with two Early Bronze Age cremation burials in

⁴⁴ Wiltshire and Swindon HER SU14NE729.

⁴⁵ Newall 1931.

⁴⁶ Last 2005, 19; Stoodley 2007b; DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013.

⁴⁷ Payne 2004.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁹ Hawley 1910.

⁵⁰ Last 2004; 2005.

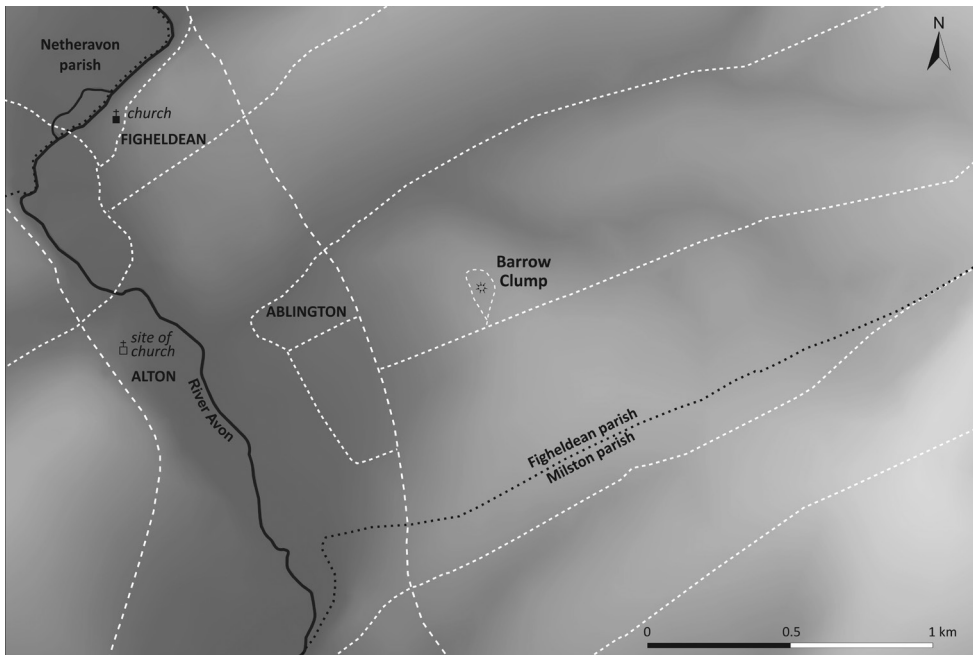


Figure 11. Barrow Clump, Wiltshire: setting and routeways.

collared urns, were unearthed over three seasons between 2012 and 2014 as part of Operation Nightingale in conjunction with Wessex Archaeology, bringing the total number of excavated early medieval graves to seventy-two.⁵¹ A continuing programme of investigation by the community group Breaking Ground Heritage initiated in 2017 has uncovered several further graves.

A significant proportion of the cemetery is now likely to have been revealed, and some interesting patterns in the grave arrangements are beginning to emerge. Particularly intriguing are the possible relationships – chronologically and socially – between the individuals buried in the berm and those buried in the barrow ditch. A higher proportion of graves are aligned with the ditch than are perpendicular to it, and the latter appear to be concentrated in the south-eastern part of the barrow, furthest from the village of Figheldean. A notable cluster of burials without grave-goods was located in the berm, perhaps representing later additions or belonging to a different social status or funerary tradition. Sixteen of the burials have been identified as female and ten as male, while a further eight are juvenile or infant burials. A line of weapon burials aligned with the ditch can also be identified, perhaps performing a symbolic ‘sentinel’ function. Several relatively high-status burials were identified, such as a female within a possible coffin accompanied by numerous items including a small square-headed brooch and two button brooches; a male with a bronze-bound bucket and spearhead; and another with a shield,

⁵¹ DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013; 2014; P. Andrews *pers. comm.* 2014. Operation Nightingale is an initiative which provides archaeological training to former military personnel and veterans injured in recent conflicts as a means to aid their recovery.

spear and sword. At Barrow Clump, dress styles and fashions are ostensibly relatively provincial, characterised by an absence of Kentish or Anglian material and scant indication of influence from further afield.⁵²

One aspect of the Barrow Clump assemblage is, though, particularly distinctive and thought-provoking. Although there is no clear evidence of post-Roman burial at Barrow Clump before the late fifth century at the earliest,⁵³ numerous items of Romano-British manufacture – including a Colchester-type brooch and Trumpet brooch, both dating from the first or second century AD – accompanied the burials. A pierced Roman coin found in subsoil was also considered likely to derive from a disturbed burial.⁵⁴ While information on Early Anglo-Saxon settlement in the area is elusive, considerable evidence for Roman settlement has been located. Five hundred metres west of the village of Figheldean, on the opposite bank of the Avon and just across the parish boundary into Netheravon, geophysical survey has revealed the plan of a corridor villa among multi-period features including another small group of round barrows.⁵⁵ Excavation 150m to the south-east of this villa has also uncovered extensive evidence for Romano-British settlement.⁵⁶ It has been suggested that villas located within the river valleys on Salisbury Plain operated as estate centres for goods produced by agricultural villages on the downland,⁵⁷ and Figheldean or Netheravon may have continued in a similar capacity into the early medieval period. Within the hundred of Elstub, a minster is most likely to have been located at Netheravon, although, as Pitt has noted, the parish of Enford was the largest in the hundred, and its church also had early origins.⁵⁸ Figheldean, probably 'Fygla's valley', was in the hundred of Amesbury, and was composed of six tithings, three on either side of the Avon. Barrow Clump lay in the southernmost tithing to the east of the river, which was known as Ablington, probably 'Ealdbeald's farm', in an open field recorded in 1790 as 'Barrow' field.⁵⁹

Significantly, as mentioned above, the most disproportionately reused type of barrow in Wessex is in fact the Roman barrow. It is worth noting that the sample size is of course very small, with three of the five known Roman funerary mounds in Wiltshire being those found to contain early medieval burials on Overton Hill, 2.3km south-east of a known Early Anglo-Saxon settlement at Avebury.⁶⁰ These three examples are, however, highly significant, as the reuse of Roman barrows is exceptionally rare nationally. One notable site is Linton Heath, Cambridgeshire, where over a hundred intrusive inhumations dating from the late fifth to the late sixth century AD were recovered from a barrow said to contain a 'primary Roman cremation burial'.⁶¹ Roman barrows in Britain are often found on the slopes of

⁵² DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013, 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2014, 14.

⁵⁵ McOmish *et al.* 2002, 104–5.

⁵⁶ Graham and Newman 1993; McKinley 1999b.

⁵⁷ McOmish *et al.* 2002; Fulford *et al.* 2006b, Chapter 7.

⁵⁸ Pitt 1999, 94–6.

⁵⁹ Gover *et al.* 1939, 366; Thorn and Thorn 1979; Crowley 1995.

⁶⁰ Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 192.

⁶¹ Dunning and Jessup 1936, 41, 49.

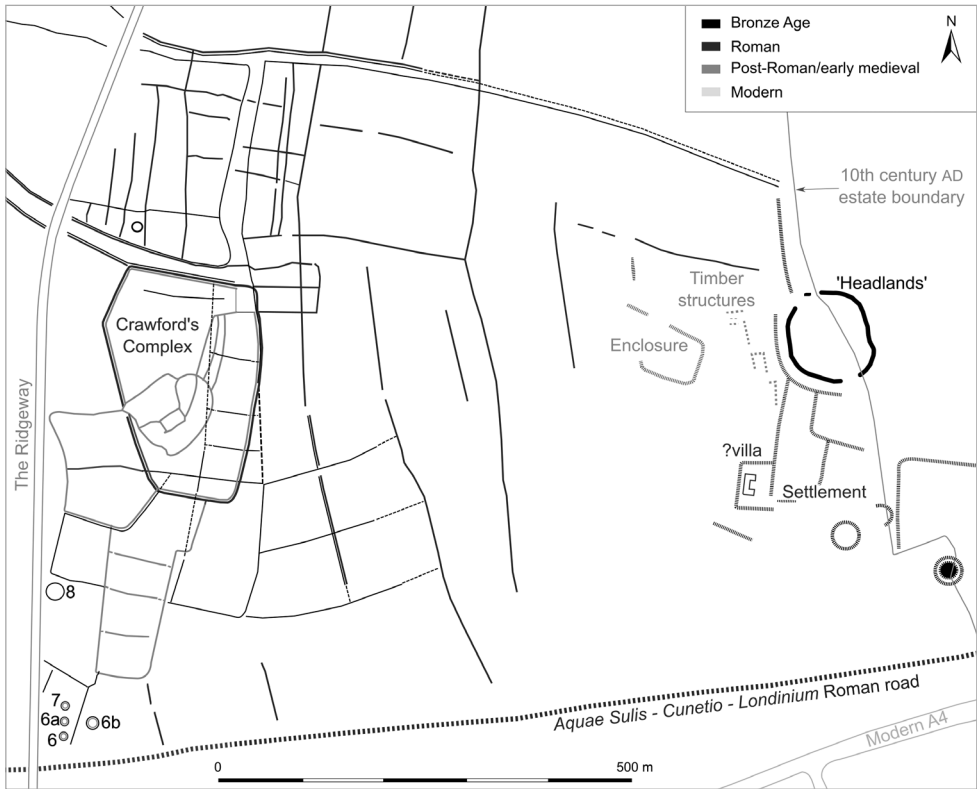


Figure 12. Plan of features on Overton Hill (redrawn after Fowler 2000[AQd], figure 4.2).

hills, rather than on the crests like their prehistoric antecedents.⁶² It has been suggested that the line of barrows on Overton Hill follow a north–south alignment – perpendicular to the Roman road – so that they could be visible from the later prehistoric/Roman settlement and probable villa at ‘Headlands’.⁶³ If occupation of this site did persist into the post-Roman period, it is reasonable to suggest that the barrows held a continued resonance or that an awareness of their origins lingered on in the collective memory of the community (Figure 12).

The three Roman barrows (Overton Hill 6, 6a and 7), and a Bronze Age barrow (6b) which lay 50–100m to the south-west, were excavated in the 1960s in response to the threat from deep ploughing.⁶⁴ All four produced evidence for funerary reuse in the fifth or sixth century AD. Overton Hill 7, which had previously been opened by both Colt Hoare and Thurnam, contained a tomb dated by pottery and other artefacts to the second century AD, while a child burial on the periphery of the same mound was dated to the early medieval period on the basis of grass-tempered sherds. Finds of human bone and chaff-tempered pottery in barrows 6 and 6a indi-

⁶² Eckardt *et al.* 2009, 68.

⁶³ Fowler 2000b, 59.

⁶⁴ Smith and Simpson 1964; Smith 1966.

cated the probable presence of further early medieval burials. Unlike the Roman barrows, barrow 6b was considered to have been untouched by antiquarian investigation. A crouched burial, accompanied by a Beaker and other Early Bronze Age items, was located in the central grave-pit, above which were the secondary Bronze Age cremation deposits of two individuals. Four considerably later inhumations, all likely to date from the late fifth or sixth century, comprised a child, two adult males – one with grave-goods including a shield boss and spearhead – and an adult female with ten amber beads and a bronze Roman key.⁶⁵

The barrows lie to the south of a small enclosed settlement and field system known as Crawford's Complex, which probably dates from the late Roman or early post-Roman period, part of which was imposed on earlier 'Celtic' fields.⁶⁶ The 'Headlands' complex, which incorporates a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age enclosed settlement – divided by an early medieval tithing boundary – and a possible Roman villa, formed an important focal point in the landscape just 1km north-east of the barrows.⁶⁷ The presence of post-Roman settlement evidence in the immediate area of the Overton Hill barrows suggests that there was little spatial separation between the living and the dead here at this time. It is increasingly recognised that Early Anglo-Saxon communities were not averse to living alongside contemporary cemeteries, as demonstrated by sites such as Grove Farm, Market Lavington, Wiltshire, or indeed prehistoric funerary sites.⁶⁸ This perhaps also signals a desire to keep a close eye on funerary sites and ancestral monuments, especially in such a frequently traversed landscape.

The crucial question here is whether barrows 6, 6a and 7 were actually recognised as being of Romano-British construction when the early medieval secondary interments were made. The excavators remarked that the Roman barrows were 'almost imperceptible' in comparison with the larger Bronze Age bowl barrow.⁶⁹ This degradation is, however, likely to have been caused by medieval and later ploughing, and the earthworks may have been considerably more imposing in the Early Anglo-Saxon period. Postholes were discovered in the ditches of two of the Roman barrows, suggesting that they had originally been surrounded by timber settings. Standing posts are a feature of both Anglo-Saxon and Romano-Celtic pagan ritual practice,⁷⁰ and it is possible that the mounds continued to be identified by above-ground markers. Alternatively, knowledge of their biographies may have remained in social memory for the three centuries prior to their reuse. As Hamerow has argued, 'the continued use of old boundaries, geographical divisions, and meeting places is intrinsically likely, although it need not imply that these boundaries were politically maintained'.⁷¹ The Romano-British barrows may have defined such a dividing line in the landscape, and their reuse could have reinforced or re-established this boundary.

⁶⁵ Eagles 1986.

⁶⁶ Fowler 2000b, 55–9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 59–60.

⁶⁸ Cf. Crewe 2012.

⁶⁹ Smith and Simpson 1964, 68.

⁷⁰ Blair 1995.

⁷¹ Hamerow 2002, 124.

There is no apparent evidence that the *Aquae Sulis–Cunetio–Londinium* Roman road was in use during the period of study, although it has been argued that its course is followed by part of the mid-tenth-century bounds of *Ofærtune* (possibly West Kennett).⁷² A few skeletons, of potential early medieval date, were found in the agger of the road, close to its junction with the Ridgeway, when ground was levelled c. 1957.⁷³ This latter route, in contrast, was evidently in use. It is alluded to in the compound *strætford* in the late tenth-century bounds of West Overton,⁷⁴ and it may also be the *herepað* mentioned in the bounds of East Overton, dated AD 939.⁷⁵ The element *stræt* implies a paved road, and suggests that the passage through the river is likely to have been metalled or reinforced to support frequent or heavy traffic. In its present linear form, the section of Ridgeway that runs across Overton Hill (Plate 1) is demonstrably later than the field systems it overlies and cuts. It must therefore have developed after the abandonment of the ‘ancient’ landscape depicted on the aerial photographic transcription, but before the beginning of the tenth century – that is, around the fifth to sixth centuries AD.⁷⁶

The relative modernity of this particular stretch of the Ridgeway need not mean, however, that the general pattern of movement through the landscape and the tenorial organisation have changed dramatically since later prehistory. Although the mapping of fixed physical lines in the landscape is a later construct, earlier routes are likely to have been sited in broadly similar locations. Rather than a single ridgeway, it is more realistic to envisage a collection of droveways which together made up a ‘Ridgeway route’.⁷⁷ There is evidence to suggest that downland on the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain was used for the seasonal grazing of herds and flocks from as far afield as the lowlands of the Hampshire Basin in later prehistory.⁷⁸ It is not unreasonable to believe that a tenorial structure was present by the late Roman period, partially determined by ‘lines of movement through this landscape, which were essentially elements in a late prehistoric transhumance route’.⁷⁹ In summary, then, the early medieval burials on Overton Hill were placed adjacent to an important routeway which, by the time it was consolidated into a formal track or road sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries AD, was used by seasonally migrating groups, potentially from wide-ranging areas of Wessex. It is also likely to have been used by anyone moving through the landscape on a day-to-day basis. This was an accessible, visible and ancestrally (or at least locally) symbolic funerary locale, the significance of which is clearly enhanced by the origins and structure of these barrows.

Another example of a burial site that combines the utilisation of a morphologically distinctive barrow with visibility from a well-traversed route can be found at

⁷² ‘...ofer þone wuda on þa stræt andlang stræte ofer þone broc...’ (S547); Fowler 2000b, 53. Cf. Fowler 2000a, FWP11a for an interpretation and attempt at tracing the course of these bounds.

⁷³ Fowler 1970, 53.

⁷⁴ S784.

⁷⁵ S449; Fowler 2000b, 61.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁷⁸ Oosthuizen 2013, 31.

⁷⁹ Fowler 2000b, 257.



Plate 1. The Ridgeway at Overton Hill, Wiltshire, from just north of the Roman road and west of Overton Hill 6, 6a, 6b and 7. The barrow visible in the centre right is Overton Hill 8. Photo by author.

Yatesbury, 6km north-west of Overton Hill and 3.5km north-west of Avebury. Ekwall was the first to propose that *Etesberie*, the Domesday name of this village, derived from OE *geat burh*, 'pass or gap in a fortified enclosure'.⁸⁰ The first element of this derivation, however, was all but dismissed by Gover *et al.*, owing to the apparent lack of any convincing evidence on the ground for such a feature.⁸¹ Yet fieldwork carried out in the village as part of the Compton Bassett Area Research Project in the 1990s mapped three enclosures, including Enclosure 3, which lies at the heart of the village and is fossilised in its plan. Earthwork survey and targeted excavation showed that this feature had originated in the late Roman period, and that the largest of its ditches was of probable Middle Anglo-Saxon date. Furthermore, an opening was revealed at its southern end, confirming the possibility that the *herepað* originally ran directly through the village and corresponding convincingly with the *geat* of the place-name.⁸² The *herepað* was an important communication route, linking Wroughton with Marlborough via Yatesbury and Avebury, and it is highly likely that a routeway between the latter two settlements followed a similar course from the Roman period or earlier: a Romano-British settlement was excavated 500m south-east of Yatesbury village centre in 1992, and Windmill Hill villa also lies adjacent to the route.⁸³

In 1833, two intrusive early medieval skeletons were discovered when a double barrow was lowered in Barrow Field, adjacent to a track known as Barrow Way or Yatesbury Lane, the conjectured route of the abovementioned *herepað*. The burials, in the southernmost mound, were accompanied by a cylindrical metal workbox with lid and chain, 'terracotta' beads and a large knife or seax. The workbox can be dated to the seventh century and indicates a high-status female burial.⁸⁴ Prior to levelling, the barrows had been considerably larger and more imposing, perhaps over 6m in height.⁸⁵ The proximity of the barrow to, and its visibility from, the routeway seem to have been determining factors in the choice of location for these burials. The barrow is visible from most directions, around 270 degrees, but is obscured from view by a rise in the land on the approach to Yatesbury from Avebury. The visual impact of the mound may have been enhanced by the fact that it comes into view only once it is in close proximity.

The Yatesbury burial is later in date than the other examples discussed so far in this section, and must be viewed in the context of the political climate of the area when the burial was made. The area now recognised as Wiltshire ultimately emerged close to the core of the dominant kingdom of Wessex, but while the southern half of the county lay in the political heartland of the Gewisse by the Middle Anglo-Saxon period documentary evidence suggests that the area north of Salisbury Plain remained disputed until the start of the ninth century. From the mid-seventh century the expansion of Mercia southwards following the annexation of the Hwicce resulted in the Gewissan abandonment of the bishopric at

⁸⁰ Ekwall 1936.

⁸¹ Gover *et al.* 1939, 264.

⁸² Reynolds and Semple 2012, 93.

⁸³ Reynolds 1995, 28; Wiltshire and Swindon HER SU07SE312, SU07SE305.

⁸⁴ Phase AS-FD to AS-FE in Hines and Bayliss 2013.

⁸⁵ Semple 2003, 76.

Dorchester-on-Thames by the AD 660s, and led to a frequently contested political frontier between the Gewisse and the Mercians in the northern half of the county.⁸⁶ Sarah Semple has previously argued that the distinctive funerary record of this region was strongly influenced by this territorial instability, and that elements of the natural topography together with aspects of the antecedent landscape were exploited in funerary contexts to convey powerful messages of defiance and territoriality.⁸⁷ Burial sites provided visual cues for people moving through the landscape, signalling the rights to land of particular groups, and were perhaps perceived as metaphysical boundaries.⁸⁸ This would clearly have been a multifaceted process, and burials may have acted in conjunction with man-made physical boundaries or natural places that were imbued with meaning, for which evidence may not have survived.

Funerary events that symbolically exploit ancient monuments in combination with prominent topographic positions, and which may have performed a similar 'sentinel' function to those in the north Wiltshire area, are located along the putative fringes of the territory of the *Meonware*, in the Meon valley area and on the western limits of the South Downs in south-east Hampshire. Initially an independent territory, the province of the *Meonware* is reported to have been temporarily placed under South Saxon control by Wulfhere of Mercia in the mid-seventh century, before being conquered and annexed by the West Saxons in the second half of the same century.⁸⁹ Two cemeteries in the Meon valley – Storey's Meadow and Snell's Corner – display an associative relationship with a Bronze Age barrow, while finds suggestive of intrusive burials have been located in and around a barrow on War Down. The latter lies on a major watershed delineated by the South Downs range from Butser Hill to the present boundary with West Sussex, which may have represented a natural boundary between folk territories. The frontier between land pertaining to the South Saxons and the 'Jutish provinces' is likely to have followed much the same line as the county boundary.⁹⁰ Further finds that may derive from secondary barrow burials were made at Preshaw Farm and Dolly's Firs, which could feasibly lie at the western and northern extents of the *Meonware* territory.

A prominent long barrow known as Adam's Grave or *Wodnesbeorg* ('Woden's barrow'), on the southern edge of the Marlborough Downs, is recorded as the site of two battles in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁹¹ The theophoric name of this site betrays the sense of awe surrounding this imposing class of monument. Howard Williams observed a particularly high frequency of long barrow reuse in Wessex, representing nearly a quarter of monuments reused in this region (compared to the national average of 8 per cent).⁹² As mentioned above, the present research has determined that long barrows are disproportionately well represented among barrow types reused for early medieval burial in Wiltshire.

⁸⁶ Yorke 1990, 136.

⁸⁷ Semple 2003; 2013, 38–44.

⁸⁸ Semple 2003, 83.

⁸⁹ Yorke 1994, 14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹¹ ASC 592, 715.

⁹² Williams 1997, 21.

Burial, Landscape and Identity in Early Medieval Wessex

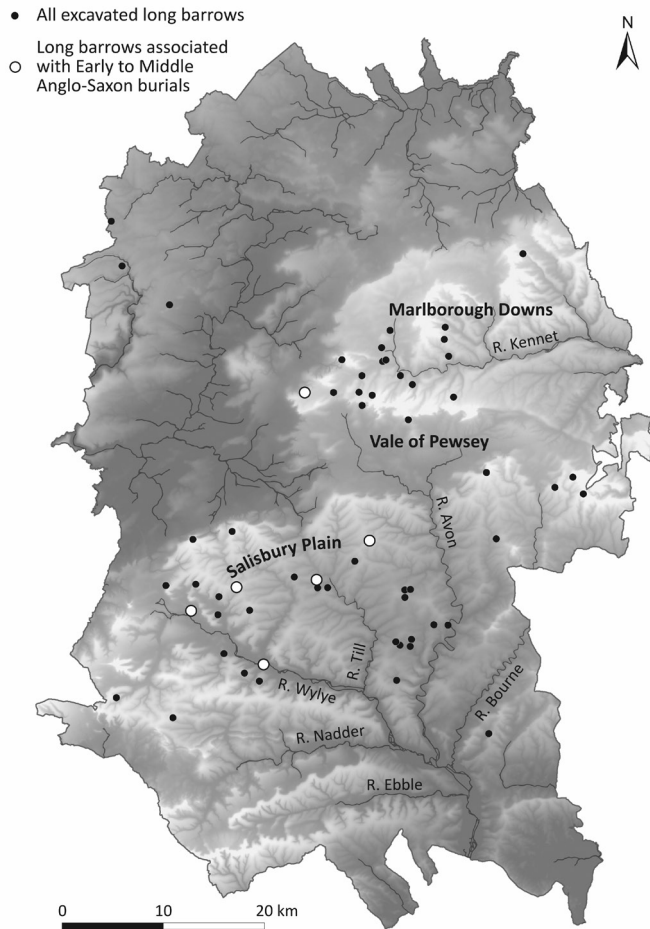


Figure 13. The distribution of excavated long barrows in Wiltshire and those associated with Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites.

Long barrows were a remarkably popular choice in the Wylde valley and western Salisbury Plain areas of Wiltshire (Figure 13), with several small groups of intrusive burials discovered here, in Sherrington Long Barrow, Bowl's Barrow and King Barrow. Numerous mounds in this area were opened in the nineteenth century by Cunnington, Thurnam and Colt Hoare; between 1800 and 1809, William Cunnington excavated a quarter of all known long barrows on Salisbury Plain and the South Wiltshire Downs.⁹³ While long barrows are typically found on valley slopes or ridge-tops, the positioning of these monuments on Salisbury Plain is remarkably riverine.⁹⁴ On the Marlborough Downs, conversely, only one long barrow has been found to be associated, indirectly, with an early medieval burial

⁹³ Eagles and Field 2004, 48.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

site (Kings Play Hill), despite the fact that numerous such barrows have been excavated there. Long barrows appear, therefore, not to have been desirable as funerary sites in this area. Nevertheless, most have only been partially investigated and such is the considerable size of many long barrows that intrusive burials may have been missed by excavators in many cases.⁹⁵

Directly across the Frome valley from the upper reaches of the River Wylfe – at Barrow Hill, Buckland Dinham, Somerset – a group of five or six burials of sixth- or seventh-century date was discovered in 1925 close to the site of a chambered long barrow robbed for stone in the early nineteenth century.⁹⁶ This is the only example of apparent direct association with any barrow in Somerset. In addition, a possible round barrow (which, alternatively, may represent spoil from nearby quarries) was also located within 50m of the burials.

In Dorset, approximately sixty certain or probable long barrows have been identified, of which only ten have been excavated and recorded. The remainder are either unexcavated, or display signs of having been opened but not recorded. Many are significantly plough-levelled or are only visible as cropmarks. All of the excavated long barrows in Dorset are on chalk bedrock, and two (a fifth of the excavated examples) have produced intrusive Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon inhumations, both in Cranborne Chase. Given that only a small proportion of these monuments have been excavated in other areas of the county, the potential remains for the discovery of further secondary inhumations of early medieval date in association with other long barrows in the county. Hampshire, meanwhile, has very few Neolithic monuments in comparison with its neighbouring counties, lacking the causewayed enclosures, henges and cursus monuments that dominate the landscapes of Wiltshire and Dorset. There are only around thirty-eight known or probable long barrows in Hampshire,⁹⁷ in contrast with over 100 in Wiltshire. Notable concentrations of long barrows can, however, be found to the west of the Salisbury Avon valley on the edge of Cranborne Chase, and in a line north and west of the Stockbridge Anticline between the parishes of Over Wallop and Wonston. Only eleven Hampshire long barrows have been excavated to any degree, just two of which have been the subject of modern excavation.⁹⁸ Three long barrows in Hampshire are associated with Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites, two of which are found on Portsdown Hill, a narrow chalk ridge that overlooks Portsmouth and the English Channel.

The early medieval funerary appropriation of long barrows is a long-lived practice, and is generally characterised by communal burial rather than isolated inhumations. A long barrow known as Bevis's Grave, on Portsdown Hill, Hampshire, formed the focus of a large seventh- to tenth-century cemetery. Eighty-eight individuals were found in seventy-one graves during excavations in 1974–76, in advance of the construction of the A3(M) road, although many more burials may remain undiscovered.⁹⁹ The inhumations lay within and adjacent to the southern

⁹⁵ Williams 1997, 21; Semple 2013, 41.

⁹⁶ Horne 1926.

⁹⁷ RCHME 1979; Hampshire HER.

⁹⁸ de Mallet Morgan 1959.

⁹⁹ Rudkin 1976; 2001.

ditch of the long barrow, which had been largely destroyed by chalk digging in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most of the inhumations were on a west–east alignment, although two were orientated south–north. Twenty of the inhumations were accompanied by grave-goods, mainly knives and buckles, although one was buried with a hanging bowl similar to one found at the sixth- to seventh-century hilltop settlement on Chalton Down, 10km to the north-north-east.¹⁰⁰ Bevis's Grave lies on the false crest of the slope at the eastern end of Portsdown Hill, and is thus highly visible from the east. The ridge itself is a conspicuous landmark both from the sea to the south and from far inland to the north. A possible Roman cobbled road surface, cut by the early medieval burials, was also found to follow the barrow ditch, and the Roman road linking Hayling Island with *Clausentum* and *Venta Belgarum* (Margary 421) passes 600m to the north. Radiocarbon dating of five of the inhumations by Cherryson confirmed the longevity of the cemetery: the earliest calibrated date was AD 595–665 and the latest was AD 890–1020 (both at 95.4 per cent probability), implying that it was in use at least between the first half of the seventh century and the mid-tenth century.¹⁰¹

A notable apparent exception to the communal burial trend in relation to long barrows is Woodyates Inn, just on the Dorset side of Bokerley Dyke (see below, pp. 135–6). Within this barrow, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Colt Hoare found an extended female inhumation, possibly a bed burial, accompanied by sumptuous grave-goods including an ivory ring – possibly from a bag or pouch – and a millefiori plaque suspended from a gold chain. Although this plaque seems ultimately to have been used as a pendant, the closest Anglo-Saxon parallels are from linked pin suites – such as the one found with the high-status female burial at Roundway on the Marlborough Downs – and it may originally have formed a centrepiece for such an item. Millefiori glass inlays are common within Roman objects, and some of the larger pieces of millefiori used in Anglo-Saxon jewellery may be reused Roman work.¹⁰² It is conceivable that such items therefore furnished the wearer, or the grave in which they were deposited, with a sense of *Romanitas*. The barrow also lies just under 300m north of the north-eastern terminus of the Dorset Cursus, a Neolithic monument believed to have formed a grand avenue between existing groups of long barrows.¹⁰³

Six certain or probable Neolithic bank barrows have been identified in Dorset. This poorly understood monument type is found almost exclusively in this county, and may represent the material expression of a territorial or symbolic boundary, rather than performing a funerary function.¹⁰⁴ Some may have resulted from the extension of an existing long barrow. The only excavated example – and the most massive, at over 500m in length – which extends across the interior of Maiden Castle, was found to contain two early medieval male inhumations at its eastern end. One of the burials was accompanied by a scramasax and knife, probably dating from the first half of the seventh century, and some fragments of belt fit-

¹⁰⁰ Geake 1999, 6.

¹⁰¹ Cherryson 2005b, 48.

¹⁰² Wedlake 1982, 132; White 1988, 148; Geake 1997, 110–11, 120.

¹⁰³ Green 2000, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Sharples 1991.

tings.¹⁰⁵ The other was radiocarbon dated to between the seventh and ninth centuries AD.¹⁰⁶ The potential remains for the discovery of further burials of early medieval date within other bank barrows in the county, although the placement of interments within the Maiden Castle bank barrow is likely to have been influenced by a combination of factors. These may have included the presence of the hillfort itself, the Roman temple and the Roman burials, as well as any potential territorial divisions represented by the bank barrow or hillfort.

Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon funerary evidence is conspicuous by its absence from the megalithic monuments that are found in certain areas of the Wessex downland. The probable decapitation burial found within Stonehenge is the only example of the appropriation of a monument of this type, supporting the idea that superstitious beliefs surrounded such features during the period under study.¹⁰⁷ Early medieval burials at prehistoric stone settings are generally unusual in Britain, although examples have been found at Little Rollright, Oxfordshire, and at Yeavering, Northumberland.¹⁰⁸

Non-funerary earthworks and settlements

Evidence for the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon funerary reuse of the earthwork remains of prehistoric and Roman settlements, linear features, field systems and hillforts is extensive and substantial in the present corpus – a point to be underlined given the emphasis placed on the reuse of funerary monuments by previous studies. Features in this category account for just over a quarter of the reused monuments in the study region. The incidence of appropriation is highest in Dorset, where 65 per cent of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites reused such monuments (predominantly enclosures and settlement features), compared with 27 per cent for Wiltshire and Somerset and 17 per cent for Hampshire. While the funerary appropriation of an earlier barrow, for instance, may be easily conceived as an intentional and logical choice by mourners, the repurposing of non-funerary earthworks often poses a greater challenge for interpretation. It cannot always be assumed that such features were reused consciously and deliberately, and a detailed examination of the overall topographical, political and ideological context of such sites is vital to appreciating their significance.

Dykes and other linear earthworks thought to be of later prehistoric, Romano-British or post-Roman construction or (re)fortification, such as Bokerley Dyke on the Wiltshire–Hampshire border, are today popularly characterised as enigmatic lines in the landscape, and there is considerable evidence that these formations held potent connotations in the Anglo-Saxon psyche. Linear features often possess names associated with powerful supernatural entities, such as Woden/Grim, although this practice of nomenclature may not have emerged until after the conversion to Christianity (see Chapters 2 and 5).¹⁰⁹ Indeed, it is important to

¹⁰⁵ Wheeler 1943, 78.

¹⁰⁶ Brothwell 1971.

¹⁰⁷ Semple 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Pitts *et al.* 2002, 140.

¹⁰⁹ Semple 2013, 174–5.

be mindful that many of these features may still have been functional in the Early Anglo-Saxon period, if not later. Semple has observed the prevalence of the reuse of linear earthworks in the early medieval funerary record of the Yorkshire Wolds and, although dating is in many cases imprecise, this appears to have been a trend that spanned the sixth to eighth centuries.¹¹⁰ Beyond posing physical territorial boundaries, prominent linear earthworks may also have represented figurative thresholds or liminal zones, or stark reminders of authority.¹¹¹ This partly accounts for the tendency for later execution sites to be situated at the limits of territories, although boundary areas or buffer zones between territories were potentially characterised by wastes or agriculturally marginal land – though perhaps seasonally exploited and traversed – which is also likely to have had practical implications for the siting of such cemeteries.

Two groups of burial sites on the chalk downland of eastern Salisbury Plain, near the historic boundary between Wiltshire and Hampshire, usefully illustrate the intentional placement of burials within, or in close proximity to, linear earthworks. Roche Court Down, Winterslow, is situated less than 400m from the Hampshire border on a saddle of land between more elevated areas of downland to the north and south and lower-lying land to the east and west. Here, a Bronze Age barrow and a linear earthwork attracted and demarcated successive early medieval funerary events. The prehistoric barrow contained a superficial secondary interment, interpreted as early medieval, in addition to the primary Middle Bronze Age burial.¹¹² A second barrow, interpreted as being of early medieval construction, contained a central primary male inhumation in a large cist filled with flint nodules, accompanied by an iron knife, a buckle or clasp and sheep leg bones.¹¹³ A third barrow contained a sherd of early medieval pottery but no human remains; the excavator, J. F. S. Stone, described the barrow as ‘completely undisturbed’, implying that it was a non-mortuary or ‘cenotaph’ monument.¹¹⁴ This mound had also been marked by a standing post, a noted feature of pre-Christian ritual sites, which reinforces the possibility that this location was a focus for both funerary and non-funerary ceremonial activity.¹¹⁵

Roche Court Down Flat Cemetery, to the north of the barrows, contained sixteen individuals in thirteen roughly east–west graves, potentially dating from the seventh century and perhaps broadly contemporary with the barrow burials. The only grave-goods were two iron knives and the leg of an ox.

Roche Court Down Execution Cemetery, 40m west of the ‘cenotaph’ barrow, comprised eighteen skeletons, all but one male, buried within the ditch of a linear earthwork.¹¹⁶ There were eleven incidences of decapitation, eight of wrists bound behind the backs, two of pronation and seven of multiple burial. Heavy flints had been placed on top of many of the interments. Stone acknowledged that there

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36–7.

¹¹¹ Williams 2006, 90; Semple 2013.

¹¹² ‘Roche Court Down Barrow 3’ in the Appendix.

¹¹³ ‘Roche Court Down Barrow 2’ in the Appendix.

¹¹⁴ Stone 1932, 576.

¹¹⁵ Blair 1995; Semple 2004, 145–6.

¹¹⁶ Wiltshire and Swindon HER SU23NE604.

was an emerging group of execution cemeteries associated with earthworks on the periphery of Wiltshire, but interpreted these individuals as 'Saxons or Jutes ... slaughtered by the Romano-Britons' in the fifth or sixth century.¹¹⁷ The rites mentioned above are, nevertheless, common indicators of judicial execution in a Late Anglo-Saxon context.¹¹⁸ This cemetery is therefore likely to postdate the period of study, and it could be speculated that Roche Court Down developed negative connotations later in its biography as a funerary locale.

At Warren Hill, Tidworth, 13km north of Roche Court Down, a quadruple burial was found to have been inserted into the end of a linear earthwork, probably a prehistoric or Roman lynchet that formed part of a wider field system. Although historically in the county of Hampshire, the site lies within 200m of the boundary, in what is now Wiltshire. In 1992, a group of soldiers discovered human remains on a small spur of the hill, and excavations carried out at the site by Roy Entwistle and students from the University of Reading in the same year revealed the inhumations of four adult males accompanied by weapons.¹¹⁹ The individuals lay side by side in the same grave, and are likely to have been buried at the same time. Although the burials were considered to date from the middle of the sixth century, they could conceivably range from the late fifth to the early seventh century, and are the only known example of a quadruple weapon burial from this period in England.¹²⁰ Given the collective nature of the grave as well as the ostensibly 'frontier' location, it is possible that the burials relate to an episode of conflict or inter-community violence.¹²¹

The earthworks of Bokerley Dyke, which form part of the historic boundary between Dorset and Wiltshire, are a hugely significant feature in the Wessex landscape. Despite having been the subject of extensive excavation and intensive fieldwork intermittently since the last decades of the nineteenth century, the chronology of these complex earthworks is still relatively poorly understood.¹²² Many of the features are certainly prehistoric, while the date of some others can only be postulated owing to their truncation and disturbance by later features. A tentative chronology has been proposed, which sees the stabilisation of the dyke as a political frontier occurring sometime in the Bronze Age or earliest Iron Age, as indicated by differences in land allotment patterns. An Iron Age settlement (Pentridge 15) on the western side of the dyke expanded in the Roman period, but was abandoned a short time after. The dyke itself, which stretches for over 5km in length, comprises numerous components, including a bank and ditch of 'considerably larger dimensions than those which constitute the normal run of Wessex boundary ditches'.¹²³ Several intrusive barrow burials are associated with the dyke: Martin 28 and Pentridge 34 directly, and Woodyates Inn indirectly.

These burials raise some important questions about territoriality, such as whether the dyke formed a significant boundary or frontier at the time the interments were

¹¹⁷ Stone 1932, 576.

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, A. 2009, 149.

¹¹⁹ Nenke *et al.* 1993, 287.

¹²⁰ Härke and Entwistle 2002, 50.

¹²¹ Williams 2006, 190.

¹²² Bowen 1990, 15.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

made, or whether it was simply a prominent landmark. All three of these sites are located close to openings in the dyke, which might represent crossing points between territories or conceptual spaces.¹²⁴ Assembly sites relating to linear earthworks are also well attested, and indeed such a meeting is recorded on Oakley Down south of Woodyates in AD 970.¹²⁵ Bokerley Junction and nearby Wor Barrow may also have been sites of judicial execution in the Late Anglo-Saxon period.¹²⁶ The two aforementioned sites on Salisbury Plain (Roche Court Down and Warren Hill) are also roughly equidistant from Grateley, the site of the promulgation of the first 'national' lawcode of King Athelstan.¹²⁷

The act of burying the dead within in a relict settlement may in certain cases be regarded as an attempt to modify the function and meaning of such a space. At Harlestone House, Bishopstone, on the interface between the Upper Greensand and Grey Chalk at the northern foot of the Marlborough Downs, the isolated grave of an adult female was found to have been cut into the corner of one of three Early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured buildings.¹²⁸ The settlement was probably abandoned before the burial was made, although this is not certain. Prehistoric occupation evidence was also uncovered at the site (hence the inclusion of the site in this category), though it seems more likely that it was the later building that attracted the burial. A small rectangular Romano-British feature, possibly an ancillary building, cut by a grave within the fifth- to sixth-century cemetery at Grove Farm, Market Lavington, can be viewed in a similar light. The placement of early medieval burials within older features of settlements, a practice suggested by Crewe to demonstrate a concern for continued land ownership and ancestral presence, is relatively common.¹²⁹ The interment could also be interpreted as a 'termination deposit'; a conscious attempt to repurpose the space as the house came to the end of its functional life.¹³⁰ An 'ancient' trackway known as the Icknield Way, which arguably extends across a large part of southern England following the line of the chalk escarpments,¹³¹ and is mentioned in a number of local charter bounds, also runs through Bishopstone, and is likely to have influenced the siting of both the settlement and the burial.

Post-Roman cemeteries in various parts of Dorset – at Worth Matravers, Manor Farm, Trumpet Major, Poundbury and Tolpuddle Ball – as well as at Hinkley Point in Somerset, are associated with evidence for antecedent settlement as well as earlier funerary activity, indicating the long-term multipurpose use of such sites. This demonstrates that settlements and cemeteries were not necessarily separated by any considerable distance in the post-Roman period and earlier.

Funerary association with hillforts can be identified as a distinctively western tradition in the study region. This said, a recent aerial photographic survey as part of the National Mapping Project identified a possible early medieval cemetery

¹²⁴ Semple 2013, 36.

¹²⁵ Wormald 1999, 437.

¹²⁶ Reynolds 2009, 114, 146.

¹²⁷ Lavelle 2005.

¹²⁸ King and Bethell 2011.

¹²⁹ Crewe 2012, 158.

¹³⁰ Tipper 2004; Hamerow 2006; Sharples 2010; Sofield 2012.

¹³¹ Harrison 2003.

of over forty graves immediately to the south of Tidbury Ring, a univallate hillfort above the Dever valley in the Hampshire Downs.¹³² The putative graves are orientated roughly east-west to north-east-south-west and are focused on a ring ditch, which may represent an earlier barrow. On Stepleton Spur, just to the south of the hillfort at Hambledon Hill, Cranborne Chase, a seventh-century cemetery was found to be directly associated with a causewayed enclosure – a Neolithic monument type which is likely to have originally served a variety of purposes. The cemetery comprised eleven or twelve roughly east-west-orientated graves in a north-south row on and perpendicular to the inner outwork bank of the enclosure. Among the small number of grave-goods were two Böhner's Type C knives – one in the largest grave and one with a double burial – and an iron pin in the latter grave. Further items may, however, have been lost through ploughing. The paucity of grave-goods and the character of the cemetery have been described as 'typical' of the seventh century,¹³³ yet there is nothing to mark out the burials as distinctly 'Anglo-Saxon', rather than more generally post-Roman, in identity. This idea of Anglo-Saxon versus sub-Roman traditions of reuse will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3.

In some cases we can postulate that non-funerary settlement features were in fact repurposed for burial because they were *mistaken* for barrows by early medieval observers. Oliver's Battery is the only example in Hampshire of a burial placed within a large and prominent extant non-funerary earthwork; in this case, an Iron Age or Romano-British hilltop enclosure. It is significant that this was an apparently isolated high-status interment of a type usually associated with barrows in areas such as the South Wiltshire Downs. The topography and prominent earthworks of Oliver's Battery combine to create a visual impact similar to that of barrows in elevated downland areas. This may have been a key factor in attracting the burial.¹³⁴ At Itchen Farm and Twyford School in Hampshire, ring-ditches of probable round-houses appeared to be the focus of funerary activity, although it is possible that these features too were interpreted as barrows, that they lay on established boundaries, or that the associations were coincidental. In truth, we cannot know whether the mourners in each of these cases believed that the earthworks were originally constructed as funerary monuments, or if indeed this was their reason for selecting them as burial locations.¹³⁵ A combination of factors is likely to have contributed to their choices, including the proximity of ephemeral, archaeologically invisible features or the particular connotations the earthworks may have held at the time.

Roman buildings

Williams remarked upon the lack of reused Roman structures for burial in Wessex, in contrast with the Upper Thames valley and Kent, as features of this type accounted for only 5 per cent of the appropriated monuments in his Wessex

¹³² Royall 2013. This site has not been included in the dataset due to a lack of dating evidence.

¹³³ Mercer and Healy 2008, 324.

¹³⁴ Andrew 1934a; 1934b.

¹³⁵ Halsall 2010, 74–5.

sample.¹³⁶ Analysis of the present corpus has, however, established that 11.5 per cent of appropriated features fall into the 'Roman buildings' category. The appropriation of Roman towns or built structures for communal burial is a notable feature of Hampshire, where 15.2 per cent of burial sites are associated with features in this category, compared with just 7.4 per cent in Wiltshire. This is partly a consequence of the counties' respective inheritances and archaeological investigation histories. The area now recognised as Wiltshire had no Roman town of *civitas* status or higher, and its small towns, such as *Cunetio*, have not been extensively excavated. In Hampshire, by contrast, the major *civitas* capital of *Venta Belgarum* developed into an important early medieval centre. Moreover, Winchester is one of the most intensively archaeologically investigated historic cities in Britain. The fact that the entire old centre of the city is underlain by Roman archaeology produces particular challenges for the analysis of early medieval funerary locations. We must consider whether Roman features were deliberately appropriated, or whether association may in fact represent only coincidental superimposition. It is also crucial to view the individual incidences of funerary activity within the wider context of the early medieval ecclesiastical and secular 'reuse' of the Roman town as a whole.

Three burial sites in old Winchester – South Gate, Lower Brook Street and St Pancras – were found to be directly associated with Roman buildings or built structures, while two large cemeteries – Old Minster and Staple Gardens – lie within the Roman walls but lack direct evidence for appropriation. At South Gate, two burials were recorded in a ditch just outside the Roman city walls in 1971. One of the burials was supine and extended, and the other, which showed early signs of leprosy, lay on its side, legs flexed. Radiocarbon analysis indicated a date of c. AD 700 – after the founding of the Old Minster – and it has thus been speculated that the individuals were deliberately excluded from its burial ground.¹³⁷ These burials are likely to predate the period in which churchyard burial became commonplace among all sectors of society, and access to such 'exclusive' burial grounds adjacent to churches at this time was undoubtedly carefully controlled and restricted.¹³⁸ The entrance to the town at South Gate had been blocked by this time, perhaps as part of a system of controlled access to the walled area, and the burial of individuals in a ditch so close to the gate would certainly appear to be a statement of intent, whether on the part of the mourners or of higher authorities. Alternatively, the site may simply have possessed special significance for those interred, owing to its proximity to the Roman walls or to the Old Minster,¹³⁹ or there may have been continued respect for the Roman custom of extramural burial.

At Bitterne, within modern Southampton but on the opposite side of the Itchen to *Hamwic*, three burial sites – SOU 207, 414 and 862 – are directly associated with the Roman port or defended settlement that occupies the promontory: probably the *Clausentum* mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary. This may have functioned as a shore fort from the late fourth century and was later utilised as a Late Anglo-Saxon

¹³⁶ Williams 1997, 21.

¹³⁷ Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, 221, cited by Cherryson 2005a, 274.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹³⁹ Cherryson 2005a, 274.

burh.¹⁴⁰ While it is tempting to view *Claesentum* as a discrete funerary zone in the seventh and early eighth centuries, the possibility that it continued to be occupied should not be dismissed. The area enclosed by the Roman walls is, however, small, and the question remains as to where the individuals buried at *Claesentum* lived. The burials dated thus far are broadly contemporary with the early phases of the development of *Hamwic* (or perhaps with its predecessor). Stoodley has argued the Bitterne burial sites were purposefully concealed from view by the Roman walls, in contrast with the contemporary St Mary's Stadium I cemetery, which lay close to the waterfront and would have been highly visible for those navigating the Itchen.¹⁴¹ Restricted visual access was thus part of a strategy of dominance imposed on those burying at Bitterne by the elite group based at *Hamwic*. Alternatively, however, it could be argued that the privacy afforded by the walls was desirable for the community burying there, or that they were regarded as an effective landmark, drawing attention to the funerary locale.

Evidence for early medieval funerary association with rural Roman buildings, such as villas, temples, wells and other sites of possible long-standing significance, is also well represented in Wessex. The funerary appropriation of the ruins of Roman buildings occurred in various parts of post-Imperial Europe, though perhaps most notably in Merovingian Gaul, where the classical or Roman past was a particularly prominent motif in the Frankish mindset.¹⁴² Here, direct reuse – that is, the placement of burials within the ruins themselves – appears to have taken place predominantly after c. AD 600. At Callas Hill II, on the northern Marlborough Downs spring line, the decision to inter a fifth- to seventh-century male with a spearhead and bucket mount within the remains of a Romano-British villa complex appears to have been a conscious one, while the sixth- to seventh-century female 'burial' within a Roman well on Poulton Downs, Mildenhall, is more ambiguous. The significance of these practices will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

I have already introduced the practice of the reuse of portable Roman objects, in relation to Barrow Clump. Evidence for the recycling of more sizeable masonry materials in early medieval funerary contexts can also be identified in Wessex. At Monkton Deverill, on the western edge of the South Wiltshire Downs, several graves were found to be lined with blocks of Roman masonry, although no structural evidence has been found in the vicinity. At Basset Down, on the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs, meanwhile, clearer indications of Roman settlement were located, together with reused Roman artefacts among the grave-goods.

In summary, Roman towns were key focal points for Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon communities in some areas of Wessex, although in most cases funerary events are secondary to settlement choices. This is certainly the case in Dorset, where continuity in both occupation and burial at sites such as Poundbury can be identified. In the Meon valley, Hampshire, the literal superimposition of new buildings over the ruins of villas may be regarded as attempts by certain groups to claim leadership,¹⁴³ although this is locally variable and riverside locations are preferred even in

¹⁴⁰ Johnston 1977.

¹⁴¹ Stoodley 2010, 46.

¹⁴² Effros 2003b.

¹⁴³ Halsall 2010, 259–60.

the absence of antecedents. With the establishment of cemeteries inside the former Roman walled settlements of Winchester and Bitterne, decisive changes were made to the functions and character of these spaces, as intramural burial became acceptable. The contravention of Roman traditions of extramural burial may even be regarded as a deliberate act of overwriting the Imperial past,¹⁴⁴ although the fact these cemeteries do not seem to predate the seventh century somewhat weakens this theory. It could be argued that the nature of funerary activity in urban areas and their environs, as opposed to rural areas, was influenced by the 'shadow' of Roman occupation. This is particularly notable in the placement of cemeteries adjacent to arterial routeways radiating from Winchester and Dorchester.

Routeways

Close proximity between Early Anglo-Saxon burial sites and routeways is a prevalent occurrence in the study area, as in other regions: Semple has identified this as a 'consistent and important feature of cemetery location' in Painsthorpe Wold, East Yorkshire, throughout the fifth to eighth centuries, while Brookes has noted a persuasive trend for similar positioning in the Early Anglo-Saxon funerary landscape of Kent.¹⁴⁵ Twenty-four burial sites in the present corpus (11.1 per cent) lie within 300m of a Roman road. This is the only sub-category of reused feature with which a greater number of sites are indirectly associated than are directly associated; that is, a higher proportion of burial sites lie 50–300m from a Roman road than lie within 50m of such a route. This may reflect the potential visibility of burial sites from a considerable distance along these roads, allowing sites to remain discernible even when set back from the thoroughfare.¹⁴⁶

We have already seen how the probable sixth-century burials on Overton Hill take advantage of the position of the existing barrows in relation to the Roman road between *Aquae Sulis* and *Cunetio*. Several examples of seventh-century isolated barrow burial, meanwhile, point to a growing ostentation in the signalling of status alongside Roman roads. An exceptional collection of finds, from a possible funerary context,¹⁴⁷ was located within a barrow at Coombe Bissett, on the South Wiltshire Downs, close to the convergence of the *Vindocladia–Sorviodunum* road (Margary 4c) and two other routeways: the Ebbles–Nadder ridgeway (marked on the modern OS map as 'Old Shaftsbury Drove') and 'Drove Lane', which links the ridgeway with Coombe Bissett village. At Ford II, Laverstock, a male burial of considerable prestige within a probably contemporary ring-ditch (possibly a ploughed-out barrow), was situated approximately 150m north of the road between Winchester and Old Sarum.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁴⁵ Brookes 2007b; Semple 2013, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Chester-Kadwell 2009, 142.

¹⁴⁷ Excavated by Cunington in 1803 (Hoare 1821b, 26–7), the grave was apparently devoid of human remains, in soils that normally afford good bone preservation. This suggests perhaps that the finds may represent a hoard. Alternatively the remains may have been deliberately removed, perhaps exhumed and moved to an ecclesiastical burial ground at a later date. See Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁸ Musty 1969.

Roman roads, in conjunction with funerary sites, may have played an important role in the formation of group identities in certain areas. Recent research led by Tania Dickinson has demonstrated that the Roman road between Canterbury and Dover, flanked by high-status sixth- and seventh-century burial sites, was fundamental in consolidating the identity of the folk territory of the *Eastringas* in eastern Kent.¹⁴⁹ Place-name, documentary and archaeological evidence attests that the Finglesham–Eastry–Woodnesborough area was a political and religious nodal place. Royal status in some areas during the Early Anglo-Saxon period was ‘built up on foundations of pagan cult’, and Woodnesborough’s association with the cult of Woden was thus particularly important for those seeking to establish an elite position.¹⁵⁰

The group of predominantly sixth-century burial sites in the Wanborough area of Wiltshire, to the south of the Roman town of *Durocornovium* (Figure 14) – including the cemetery at Foxhill and the apparently isolated burial at Callas Hill I, both situated at the ‘roadside’ of Ermin Street (Margary 41b), and the intrusive barrow burial at Hinton Downs, 750m east of the road (Plate 2) – may perhaps be conceptualised in the same light. The place-name Wanborough may have similar theophoric origins as that of Woodnesborough, although other derivations are possible: it is recorded in AD 854 as *Wenbeorgan* or *Wænbeorgan*, interpreted as *wenn* or *wænn beorg*, ‘barrow resembling a wen or boil’.¹⁵¹ The charter to which the bounds are attached is, however, judged to be spurious. Moreover, a cluster of toponyms referencing Woden, who was regarded as a progenitor of the West Saxon royal house, can be identified in this area of central Wiltshire.¹⁵² Recently, Bryn Walters has identified from 1960s air photographs two now indiscernible chalk figures, one claimed to represent Woden, on a hillside above Ermin Street close to Foxhill, near Wanborough.¹⁵³ For Walters, this prominent depiction of the supreme deity was a symbol of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ hegemony in the area. These sixth-century burial sites predate the Wessex–Mercia tensions that later characterised this area. Wanborough is connected via the aforementioned Roman road with the Upper Thames at Cricklade, and burials beside this road may have been intended to reinforce links with the Gewissan heartland. Alternatively, it may signify a continuation of the Roman tradition of roadside burial¹⁵⁴ in an area that has produced ample Romano-British settlement evidence.

Conclusion

Prehistoric and Roman remains provided the setting for a multitude of funerary locales in fifth- to ninth-century Wessex, and this chapter has provided but an illustrative overview of the range of activity recognised in this region. The funerary

¹⁴⁹ Dickinson *et al.* 2011; Dickinson 2012.

¹⁵⁰ Behr 2000, 40; Blair 2005, 57; Dickinson 2012, 157.

¹⁵¹ S312; Gover *et al.* 1939, 283–4.

¹⁵² Reynolds and Langlands 2006.

¹⁵³ Walters 2014.

¹⁵⁴ Philpott 1991.

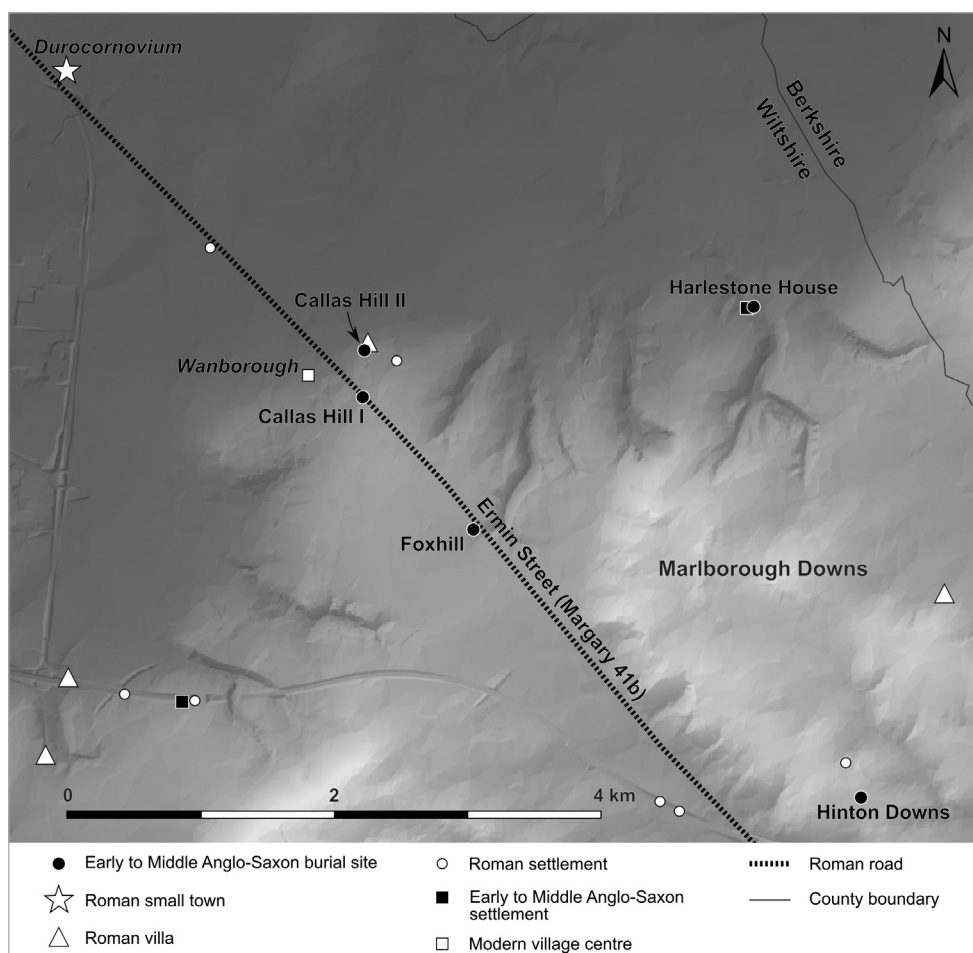


Figure 14. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites and other features in the Wanborough area, Wiltshire.

appropriation of ancient sites was a conscious and selective process that was influenced by a wide range of factors and which varied from area to area. Indeed, striking sub-regional variations can be identified in terms of the types of ancient site chosen for reuse. From this patterning we can infer that ancient features were neither regarded as homogeneous nor reused indiscriminately. Trends in the types of round barrow reused in cemetery contexts are especially apparent on the central chalk downlands of Wiltshire – partly by virtue of the intensive history of archaeological investigation in this county – with certain types of ‘fancy’ barrow favoured in particular zones. These monuments may have been deliberately selected to serve the practical or spiritual requirements of communities through their morphological idiosyncrasies or topographic context.

The decisive and innovative character of fifth- and sixth-century communal barrow reuse in the Salisbury Avon valley and central Marlborough Downs (Overton Hill) is particularly worthy of note. These areas lie within a ‘corridor’



Plate 2. Hinton Downs barrow near Wanborough, Wiltshire, viewed from the south-east. Photo by author.

which formed a near direct route between the Gewissan heartland of the Upper Thames valley and the English Channel beyond the convergence of the Salisbury Avon and Stour.¹⁵⁵ This intimates a much bigger scale of use of the antecedent landscape in terms of the signalling of identity and power. The use of barrows for isolated elite burial is a later development, emerging in the middle part of the period, and can be seen as a concentrated and intensified variation on an established funerary tradition. Communities continued to reference the same types of monument throughout the four centuries, but in subtly nuanced ways.

The evidence presented in this chapter encourages us to further interrogate the locational and geographical attributes of reused monuments, as well as the social structure of the communities that lived among them, particularly during the earlier part of the period of study. Pre-existing variations in the spatial distribution of different categories of monument – resulting from the symbolic ordering and practical utilisation of the land by prehistoric and Romano-British populations – potentially presented certain early medieval communities with problematic societal choices relating to the disposal of their dead. Although many barrows and other antecedent monuments, particularly on the upland, may have been located on common land, this might not always have been the case. Could Early Anglo-Saxon land tenure have been fluid enough to allow for those without ancestral features within their territorial bounds to move their dead to locations outside their usual sphere

¹⁵⁵ Sherratt 1996, 215–17.

of influence? Alternatively, is it possible that areas containing earlier monuments were in some way exempt from the usual tenurial arrangements? In the remainder of this book I hope to offer some answers to these questions. Notwithstanding possible territorial restrictions, funerary choices are also likely to have been influenced by a sense of place – whether ancient in origin, or the invention of contemporary kin-groups – engendered by a combination of symbolically charged topographic and man-made features, and memories connected to people and events. These popular perceptions and beliefs surrounding the natural and cultural landscape are the subject of the next chapter.

Topography and Ritual Life

The landscape of early medieval Wessex was replete with the material remains of past societies. This was particularly true of the chalk downland, upon which the marks of ancient farmers and monument builders remained at their most visually striking and profuse. As outlined in the previous chapter, communities seemingly gravitated towards these landmarks, actively reusing and repurposing them in a variety of novel ways. These sites provided tangible links to place, to past and present social practices, to important individuals and events. Yet how far the inhabitants of early medieval Wessex could have been aware of the precise origins and relative chronologies of monuments is questionable. Could they have known, without the archaeological knowledge we possess today, that a Roman enclosure was of more recent construction than a Bronze Age barrow, for instance? The same question could be asked of ‘curated’ objects deposited within graves: is there any way a sixth-century ‘collector’ of Roman coins could have been aware, for example, that a radiate of Postumus was of greater antiquity than a nummus of Theodosius I? Did they in fact recognise these artefacts and monumental constructions as ancient at all? We might argue that none of this really matters, if we suppose that these remnants of the past had already accrued complex biographies that transcended their original functions and meanings. Just as grave-goods arguably formed part of carefully selected mnemonic assemblages,¹ monuments did not exist in isolation and it is reasonable to postulate that the overall character of the landscape – composed of palimpsests of natural and cultural elements – was more important than the individual constructions within it. Natural features and anthropogenic creations combined to create something altogether more powerful.

This chapter explores the topographical setting of burial sites, and what this can tell us about the ritual significance particular locations held for early medieval communities, in terms of both their physical attributes and the cultural imprints already left upon them. The focus is on the pre-Christian rather than post-conversion evidence, while recognising the problems inherent in this distinction. How Early Anglo-Saxon ritual and religion can be defined is an enduring question. The much later composition of any written sources documenting paganism in Anglo-Saxon England creates a distorted picture. And, while the archaeological evidence is at least contemporary, it is nonetheless ‘partial, allusive, coded and equivocal’,² reflecting only selective materialised expressions of beliefs. In many respects, any enquiry into the religious practices of pre-Christian northern Europe

¹ Williams 2006, 38–43.

² Carver 2010, 5.

risks straying into the nebulous and speculative. Inevitably, many deductions concerning belief systems and practices in pre-literate societies must remain conjecture, and much can never be known. Part of the difficulty lies in how we define paganism, and whether it is indeed possible to talk objectively about what was sacred or religious without projecting our own contemporary conceptions of religion on to past societies.³ We should also be clear about how we distinguish what constitutes religion from what is 'merely' ritual activity. Indeed, funerary practices in themselves are not inherently religious acts,⁴ and we should be wary of using mortuary rites as indicators of religious affiliation or bellwethers of religious change.⁵ Numerous attempts have been made to define religion and how it intersects with archaeology,⁶ but at the broadest level religion involves systems or sets of beliefs regarding notions of the sacred. Ritual, conversely, is defined by the performance and repetition of any social process, custom or practice, which can incorporate both secular and religious activities. This chapter does not purport to give a comprehensive account of the complex and enigmatic subject of pre-Christian religion and belief, especially given the absence of any clearly defined framework for how such belief systems may have functioned. Rather, it seeks to explore how the evidence for ritual activity, more broadly, relates to the topographical positioning of burial sites and perceptions of the landscape.

Deities, place-names and ritual activity

Polytheistic paganism became a key component of the identity of the 'Anglo-Saxons', which, for a short few centuries, set them apart – at least on a superficial level – from the already converted Franks and the ostensibly Christian native dwellers of sub-Roman Britain. But the idea that the vast majority of Britons in the early post-Roman period were devout Christians, even within the more Romanised or urbanised areas, is almost certainly a misconception. An Anglo-Saxon paganism that developed as a fusion of Germanic practices and local Romano-British hybrid cults is conceivable.⁷ Furthermore, quotidian cultic activities established in the pre-Christian era were not necessarily eradicated with the onset of conversion, and it is possible to discern many continuities and fusions of practices across the sixth to eighth centuries and later.⁸

Perhaps the most familiar legacy of the prominence of deities in early medieval society can be found in the names of our days of the week, Tuesday (Tiw), Wednesday (Woden), Thursday (Thunor) and Friday (Frige), which derive from parallels drawn with their Roman counterparts Mars, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus.⁹ Royal houses evoked gods and heroic figures as progenitors: the regnal lists and

³ Hines 1997, 377; Semple 2013, 106.

⁴ Hines 1997, 379.

⁵ Halsall 2010.

⁶ Cf. Insoll 2004, 6–8.

⁷ Blair 2005, 13.

⁸ Blair 2011.

⁹ Hines 1997, 384.

genealogies composed in the eighth century indicate that all of the royal dynasties claimed descent from a pagan god,¹⁰ in almost all cases Woden.¹¹ This emphasises the role of kings in mediating with the divine and thus in guiding and controlling religious praxis.¹² That ancestral links were created with Woden, moreover, reflects their concern with signalling their prowess as warleaders.¹³ Yet whether these origin myths have their roots in the earlier pre-conversion period, or were of later invention by Christian authors and clergy, is unclear. Manifestly, the genealogies themselves are essentially fictitious and were fabricated for political purposes to legitimise and give collective authority to a nascent English nation. Contriving a common ancestry among kings might therefore have been part of a strategy to symbolically unify diverse cultural groups within a *gens Anglorum*. Nevertheless, as Charlotte Behr has argued, there is evidence – particularly in the form of bracteates and pendants found in Kentish contexts – to suggest that a cult of Woden was established early on, by the sixth century.¹⁴

Toponyms that include pre-Christian theophoric or religious elements are still identifiable in the landscape. Their distribution is difficult to interpret, but they were perhaps more likely to survive Christianisation in remote or inaccessible areas where pagan cults persisted. It is also conceivable that a significant proportion of these names appeared only in the Late Anglo-Saxon period, and are ostensibly post-conversion – perhaps even stimulated by Christian influence. Verifying the authenticity and antiquity of these names can indeed be problematic, particularly for those that refer to man-made features such as barrows or mounds, as later folklore may have played a role, reflecting the widespread survival of superstitions and vernacular rituals.¹⁵ These folk customs and perceptions can be seen as a way in which communities attempted to make sense of their local landscape and the remains of the past it contained. The body of folklore associated with monuments demonstrates a ‘long standing vernacular curiosity in them as magical sites’, which in many rural areas persisted into the post-medieval period.¹⁶

Theophoric names tend to incorporate the same gods that appear in weekdays; again, especially Woden. Elements of the landscape frequently associated with the names of gods include *feld* (field or area of open land) and *lēah* (wood or grove). In our area of study, as mentioned in the previous chapter, a cluster of potentially Woden-derived names can be found around the periphery of the Marlborough Downs *pays*: in addition to Wanborough to the north, in the southern part of the Downs the Wansdyke (*Wodnes dic*,¹⁷ ‘Woden’s dyke’) lies between the Neolithic long barrow *Wodnesbeorg*,¹⁸ ‘Woden’s barrow’, and *Wodnes dene*,¹⁹ ‘Woden’s valley’.

¹⁰ Dumville 1977.

¹¹ With the exception of the East Saxons, whose genealogy led back to Seaxneat.

¹² Chaney 1970; Pluskowski 2011.

¹³ Yorke 1990.

¹⁴ Behr 2000. The identification of Odin on bracteates, derived from the work of Karl Hauck, does, however, remain highly controversial (cf. Wicker 2015).

¹⁵ Hines 1997, 386.

¹⁶ Smiles 1994, 16; cf. Grinsell 1976; Holtorf 1998; Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999; Mees 2013, 224–5.

¹⁷ S368.

¹⁸ S272; ASC 592, 715.

¹⁹ S449

It has been suggested that Thunor is represented in *Thunreslea* in Hampshire and *Thunresfeld* in Wiltshire, but the precise sites from which they may take their names are unlocated; Tiw is also probably found in the first element of the place-name Tislea in Hampshire.²⁰ A possible alias of Woden, Grim,²¹ also appears in relation to linear earthworks or dykes, such as the Grim's Ditch that runs perpendicular to Bokerley Dyke on the historic Dorset–Wiltshire border. The numerous linear earthworks bearing this name in different parts of the country are diverse in character and date yet often unhelpfully lumped together. Bokerley, for example, is likely to have been subject to numerous phases of construction and augmentation from the Bronze Age or earliest Iron Age up to and including the post-Roman or early medieval period.²² Furthermore, we should be mindful that these earthwork-related theophoric names do not necessarily reflect places of ritual importance, but could instead have been intended to emphasise the awe-inspiring scale or formidable nature of these features.

Early Anglo-Saxon ritual life was inevitably bound to the rhythm of the changing seasons. Bede bears witness to a number of seasonal festivals and significant points in the lunar year in 'olden time', which are corroborated by other sources too.²³ These ceremonies and events involved sacrifice and offerings to the gods, and were linked with the annual cycles of crop production, fertility and the raising and slaughter of livestock. Recurrent feasting is also alluded to – a practice that is closely linked with patterns of transhumance and seasonal assembly, marking stages in the cycle of animal rearing and the migratory calendar. Feasting also played a key role in social interaction, both before and after Christianisation. It is interesting, then, that many of the archaeologically identified placed deposits of probable feasting remains, in the form of large quantities of animal bone, should all date to the cusp of conversion around the seventh century.²⁴ Feasting in a funerary context, and the deposition of items such as cooking vessels, receptacles and food itself within graves, were further processes through which social relations were reaffirmed.²⁵ At Ford II, Laverstock, Wiltshire, a hanging bowl containing two bulbs identified as onions and four possible crab apples was among the grave-goods accompanying the seventh-century male burial.²⁶ These items may be considered redolent of feasting and hospitality, noted symbols of power and wealth that the kin-group of the deceased may have wished to convey.²⁷

Additionally, concepts of the embedding of ritualised activity in the domestic sphere, hitherto explored primarily in relation to prehistory,²⁸ are increasingly rec-

²⁰ Yorke 1995, 167.

²¹ The name Grimr is, though, only recorded in much later Old Norse sources, where it appears to be a back-formation from *gríma*, 'helmet', perhaps in the sense of being disguised or masked (J. Hines pers. comm. 2018).

²² Bowen 1990.

²³ Cf. Hines 1997, 379; Wallis 1999, 53–4; Langeslag 2015.

²⁴ Sofield 2015a cites the following examples: Yeavering, Northumberland; Bloodmoor Hill, Suffolk; and the monastic sites of Eynsham Abbey, Oxfordshire, and Hartlepool, County Durham.

²⁵ Lee 2007; Härke 2014.

²⁶ Musty 1969.

²⁷ Geake 1997, 83–4; Blair 2005, 232.

²⁸ Cf. Bradley 2005.

ognised as relevant to the early medieval period, too.²⁹ Again, these practices were entwined with the seasonal rhythms of the annual cycle, in processes whereby routine tasks such as ploughing and craft production became performative acts, elevating the apparently mundane into something imbued with significance. ‘Special deposits’, such as the large heavy plough coulter found in a sealed seventh-century context at Lyminge, Kent, further emphasise the connection between ritual and agrarian activity.³⁰ Placed deposits of this type, which frequently include human burials and animal bone, are often associated with *Grubenhäuser* in apparent relation to the termination or disuse of these structures.³¹ This may, for example, have been the case at Harlestone House, Wiltshire (see Chapter 1, p. 46).

Evidence for pre-Christian ritual structures and places of ‘worship’

A handful of post-Christianisation literary references allude to the edifices of pagan worship, although we should of course be mindful of the critical stance taken by the authors of such sources in professing to document ‘heathen’ practices. Much attention has focused on the use by Bede and Gregory, among others, of the Latin term *fanum*, which is taken to signify a shrine of some sort. King Rædwald of the East Angles is reported to have placed both a Christian and a pagan altar within a *fanum* that apparently stood for several decades. Gregory, in a letter to Mellitus, suggests that *fana* be cleansed of idols and converted to Christian use rather than be destroyed; while Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, speaks of ‘profane shrines’ and denounces the worship of ‘crude pillars of the foul snake and stag’.³²

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when fervour surrounding the concept of a shared English and Teutonic ancestry was at its peak, possible templates for as yet undiscovered Anglo-Saxon temples were sought from Iron Age and medieval Scandinavia.³³ Place-names featuring the Old English elements *hearg* (temple or hilltop sanctuary) and *wēoh* (holy place, idol or altar), both of which appear in early charters, have long been viewed as indicative of Anglo-Saxon places of worship. On this basis, material evidence for Early Anglo-Saxon formal religious built structures has been meticulously sought,³⁴ but such remains have ultimately proved elusive.³⁵ In any case, the Old English terms do not in themselves imply the presence of any particular physical structures.³⁶ We now recognise the futility of seeking material evidence simply to validate the historical references, not least because the latter are so fragmentary and cannot be representative of the bigger picture.

In western Wessex, nonetheless, the use and occupation of a number of stone-built ‘Romano-Celtic’ temples persisted throughout the fourth century and in some cases into the fifth or later. While this very late use of Roman temples is not limited

²⁹ Cf. Hamerow 2012, 120–43.

³⁰ Thomas *et al.* 2016.

³¹ Hamerow 2006; Sofield 2015a; 2015b.

³² Lapidge and Herren 2009.

³³ Semple 2007, 367–8.

³⁴ Stenton 1941; Wilson 1992.

³⁵ Hutton 1991, 270–1; Carver 2010, 11.

³⁶ Hines 1997, 387.

to south-western Britain, the most prominent examples can be found here. These temples are frequently located on hilltops and/or associated with hillforts, such as the example at Maiden Castle, which continued in use into the first part of the fifth century. Their prolonged use may suggest an enduring interest in the pantheistic cults of the western Empire during and after the decline of Roman influence,³⁷ although structural alterations and additions may also point to a desire to incorporate or superimpose aspects of Christian or sub-Christian worship. At Brean Down, a coastal promontory at the western extremity of the Mendips, excavations in the 1950s revealed a fourth-century Roman temple on the eastern summit of the headland, less than 50m to the north of a Bronze Age bowl barrow.³⁸ The principal building appeared to have been demolished in the late fourth century and its masonry subsequently reused in the construction of a small east-west oriented building on its south-west side, possibly an early church.³⁹ Twenty-two extended east-west burials have been located on and close to the cliff edge to the south, several of which have been radiocarbon dated to between the fifth and seventh centuries.⁴⁰ A strikingly similar assemblage of a 'Romano-Celtic' temple and later ancillary building has been identified at Lamyatt Beacon, in Blackmore Vale, beyond the south-eastern periphery of the Mendips. Sixteen east-west burials of probable Middle Anglo-Saxon date were also found in close proximity.⁴¹ A structure on the hilltop above the extensive sub-Roman cemetery at Cannington has also been interpreted as a possible late Roman pagan shrine, which may have provided an initial stimulus for the funerary site.⁴²

The apparent disuse of 'Romano-Celtic' temples after the mid-fifth century, together with the lack of any structures that might have succeeded them on their sites later on, is argued by Costen to be indicative of the desertion of pagan cult practices in western Wessex at this time,⁴³ although it is possible that they could simply no longer be maintained. Moreover, it has been suggested that the cutting of burials into the temple at Henley Wood in the fifth to seventh centuries indicates disregard for the sacredness of the site.⁴⁴ Damage to the temple and the placement of objects in the well at Pagan's Hill in the seventh or eighth century have been viewed in a similar light,⁴⁵ although the latter may equally be interpreted as votive deposition.⁴⁶

Elsewhere in the pre-Christian landscape we must contend with more ephemeral traces of worship. John Blair has identified several categories of square enclosure that may represent pagan shrines, again thought to derive from Iron Age and 'Romano-Celtic' traditions.⁴⁷ Five undated examples of square-enclosed barrows

³⁷ Costen 2011, 178.

³⁸ ApSimon 1965.

³⁹ Rahtz 1991; Yorke 1995, 152–3.

⁴⁰ Bell 1990.

⁴¹ Leech 1986.

⁴² Rahtz 1991, 14–15.

⁴³ Costen 2011, 178.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴⁵ Rahtz and Watts 1989; Yorke 1995, 153.

⁴⁶ Yorke 1995, 166.

⁴⁷ Blair 1995.

(‘Category B’), with low banks still defining the rectilinear plan, can be found at Winterbourne Steepleton and Winterbourne St Martin on the Central Chalk Downland of Dorset. A late Iron Age cremation was found beneath the mound of another at Handley, Cranborne Chase, but excavations failed to determine whether the enclosing square-plan ditch was contemporary. Rectangular and sub-square ditched enclosures around individual graves (‘Category C’) are found in fourth-century Roman cemeteries, such as Lankhills, Hampshire, and Poundbury, Dorset, as well as in fifth- and sixth-century cemeteries perpetuating Roman practice, such as Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. A significant concentration of square-plan ditched enclosures on prehistoric monuments or ‘squared circles’ (‘Category D’) can be found in the Upper Thames valley. These tend to be revealed as cropmarks and remain unexcavated, with the exception of an example at Dorchester-on-Thames, interpreted as Neolithic but situated just 120m south of a group of nine furnished Anglo-Saxon burials focused on a round barrow.

Throughout early medieval Britain a strong correlation is apparent between square enclosed spaces and ritual or funerary activity in diverse guises – whether in the form of shrines, ‘grave houses’ or ditched burial mounds – intimating that this form held an especial significance in the psyche of contemporary populations.⁴⁸ The geographical scope and configuration of these examples ranges from the four-post structures associated with cremated remains at Apple Down, Sussex, to the ‘Pictish’ square-ditched barrows with a central grave in north-east Scotland.⁴⁹ At the mixed-rite Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Alton in the Hampshire Downs *pays*, two rectilinear structures, similar to those found at Apple Down and at Spong Hill in Norfolk, were in one case supporting a cover over a grave and in the other perhaps a raised platform upon which a cremation was placed.⁵⁰ At Stoneage Barton, Somerset, at least four seventh-century graves appeared to lie within small square-ditched enclosures, more closely comparable with the Scottish examples and those found at Poundbury, Dorset.⁵¹

Votive activity and funerary sites

There is a growing awareness of the prevalence of more ‘informal’ rural sites of ritual and religion – what might have been referred to by Graeco-Roman writers as *loci consecrati* – attested both by place-names and, more tangibly, by votive depositions focused on prehistoric sites and natural features. In recent decades there has been a shift towards a more holistic consideration of the social implications of such ‘offerings’, which reflects on them as part of a wider repertoire of ritual activity rather than simply gifts to the gods.⁵² In the conceptual framework of object biographies,⁵³ this final deposition represents the ‘death’ in the social life of

⁴⁸ Semple 2013, 104.

⁴⁹ Mitchell and Noble 2017.

⁵⁰ Evison 1988, 34–5.

⁵¹ Webster and Brunning 2004.

⁵² Lund 2010, 49.

⁵³ Cf. Kopytoff 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999.

the object. Items such as weapons, jewellery and tools could also be anthropomorphised or imbued with the supernatural power of their makers and possessors.⁵⁴ These depositions thus attach meaning to the landscape in which they are placed, reflecting human social interactions and trajectories. A spearhead found outside – but seemingly related to – the high-status female grave in a Bronze Age barrow at Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire (see below, pp. 70–1), could be a votive offering, suggesting that this was a site to visit and venerate.

Assemblages of finds considered to be indicative of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon furnished burial are, even in the absence of human remains, often attributed to funerary contexts when they could more plausibly represent votive depositions. At Hardown Hill, on the western fringes of Dorset, a collection of early medieval finds was discovered through rabbit erosion to a barrow in 1916. Hardown is the highest point in the Chideock range of hills, at 207m aOD. The objects discovered included ten spearheads, an axehead, knife, shield boss and brooch, all suggested by Vera Evison to have been deposited between the mid-fifth and mid-sixth centuries.⁵⁵ No human remains were found, but the acidity of the soils produced by the weathering of the chert bedrock may in any case have precluded the survival of bone. It has been previously argued, however, that the finds could represent a hoard or votive offering rather than being funerary in nature.⁵⁶ In a recent reassessment, Austin cautions strongly against a funerary interpretation, particularly because of the fact that it is much further west than any other culturally ‘Anglo-Saxon’ burial sites of this period.⁵⁷

At Weyhill, near Andover in the Hampshire Downs *pays*, an iron spearhead and ‘Saxon knife’, among other material – including a bone needle, a stone chisel, a Roman coin and medieval pottery – was found when a bowl barrow was opened in 1911.⁵⁸ The excavators are said to have referred to a possible primary burial and seven secondary burials, although later accounts make no mention of these.⁵⁹ The first element of the place-name Weyhill (*Leweio* in the thirteenth century; *la Wou* c. 1270; *Weo* in 1318) may derive from OE *weoh*, ‘shrine, temple or holy place’, or *hlaw*, ‘barrow’ – perhaps a corruption of both.⁶⁰ The village was the location from at least the thirteenth century of an important annual fair, focused on a large mound or barrow close to the convergence of the Harrow Way and other ‘ancient’ route-ways.⁶¹ The barrow excavated in 1911 is located less than 150m north-west of the nineteenth-century site of the fairground, and in the apparent absence of any other mounds in the vicinity, it is highly probable that this was the barrow that formed the focus of the fair. The spearhead found within the mound could be interpreted as a votive deposition, yet the presence of other items raises the possibility that the finds relate to an intrusive Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial or burials. Some of the finds dating from other periods may reflect the long-standing veneration of the site.

⁵⁴ Wright 2010; Welton 2016.

⁵⁵ Evison 1968.

⁵⁶ Green 1984, 152; Semple 2013, 80, 249.

⁵⁷ Austin 2014.

⁵⁸ Williams-Freeman 1915, 115–16.

⁵⁹ NMR SU 34 NW 8.

⁶⁰ Coates 1989, 174; Semple 1998, 121.

⁶¹ Heanley 1922.

The significance of topographic features

While much Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon ritual activity is archaeologically invisible, we can glean something of the connotations of certain landscape features by examining the surviving Old English names given to them. The social implications of toponymic vocabulary and the act of naming places have long been acknowledged in the fields of anthropology and cultural geography. Place-names are said to 'transform the sheer physical and geographical into something that is historically and socially experienced',⁶² and to strongly contribute to the development and evocation of a sense of place and collective identity.⁶³ They are, in a sense, immaterial monuments. It has been said of the 'Anglo-Saxons' that they were 'a people in possession of a vast and subtle topographical vocabulary',⁶⁴ and their nomenclature demonstrates precision and nuance. Synonyms seem to have been eschewed in favour of specific terminology. A variety of different terms for a hill could, for example, be used, depending on its particular morphological characteristics. These 'topographical' names contrast with the 'habitative' type (the latter having as its main component a word for farm or hamlet). The importance and antiquity of this category of place-names was recognised through the work of Barrie Cox, Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁵ The vocabulary of topographical place-names appears to be relatively consistent throughout large areas of England, meaning that they could also act as navigation aids for travellers moving through the landscape.⁶⁶

Brittonic place-name elements can also be identified alongside Old English toponyms, in Wessex and elsewhere, to a greater extent than was once recognised.⁶⁷ A particularly high concentration of Brittonic place-names, including 'late' formations, is apparent in north-west Wiltshire; indeed, the evidence from this area strongly suggests that this language continued to be spoken into the seventh or eighth century.⁶⁸ Surviving toponyms incorporating Brittonic are often an amalgamation of an Old English habitative element and a Brittonic topographical element denominating a landscape feature such as a river, hill or wood. Bruton in Somerset, for instance, was formed by adding *tūn*, OE 'settlement', to *brīw*, a Brittonic river name.⁶⁹

The early medieval toponymic legacy in general reveals a keen awareness of environmental character. Theophoric place-names in particular provide a glimpse into complex patterns of interaction between people, the physical landscape and the divine. The notion that in pre-Christian societies all facets of the natural world were considered sacred or numinous, to varying degrees,⁷⁰ has also been advanced in relation to Anglo-Saxon England.⁷¹ This concept stems from the idea that the

⁶² Tilley 1994, 18.

⁶³ Basso 1990.

⁶⁴ Gelling 1984.

⁶⁵ For example, Cox 1975–6; Gelling 1984; Cole 1988–9.

⁶⁶ Cole 2011.

⁶⁷ Draper 2006, 50.

⁶⁸ Coates and Breeze 2000, 115; Draper 2006, 50, 55.

⁶⁹ Costen 1992, 60.

⁷⁰ Brink 2001, influenced by the work of Lévy-Bruhl.

⁷¹ Semple 2013.

physical features could themselves possess divine power through their association with gods and mythical creatures, or by becoming 'symbolically charged'. Elements of the landscape could undergo ritual processes to become 'sacralized'; this might also necessitate their 'desacralizing', to remove the traces of other belief systems previously attached to them.⁷² Thus the prohibition in later Christian laws of the worship of particular natural features may provide an indication that these features were considered sacred in the pagan landscape.⁷³ Ethnographic literature on sacred sites and places identifies particular characteristics through which this sacrality is defined, including topographical and physical attributes such as colour or shape.⁷⁴ Hills and mountains, for example, could possess distinctive and animistic qualities, such as dramatic whaleback contours and the ability to influence light levels and meteorological conditions in the valleys below. Yet the physical or environmental properties of a landscape or element of that landscape do not, in themselves, render it sacred. Perceived sacrality is culturally specific, resulting from a set of encoded variables that can sometimes be known only to that group. In short, the ascription of significance is a 'cultural appraisal'.⁷⁵

The spiritual charging of landscape features may not have been a passive process: communities may have tried to deliberately manipulate the landscape and harness spiritual powers for their own needs. Early medieval communities were dependent on the agrarian landscape for their sustenance and survival, and thus divine assistance in improving fertility and productivity was sought through acts that would 'address' and appease the gods.⁷⁶ How this may have functioned in practice is open to speculation and in any case likely to have been locally variable. The power and symbolic charge of topographic features could perhaps have been augmented by such ephemeral means as the lighting of bonfires or beacons: the use of fire in rituals to communicate with the gods and thus to claim territory or secure the fertility of land is found in Icelandic sagas and later folklore.⁷⁷ The perambulation of fields or estates, or 'beating the bounds', in order to sanctify and secure land and crops as well as reinforce boundaries, was another performative rite that continued to be enacted in a Christian context as part of the annual Rogationtide.⁷⁸ Derived from the Latin *rogare*, 'to ask', this festival attests to a perpetual sense of anxiety surrounding the success of harvests. Whether mortuary events were connected in some way to these processional routes in the early medieval period is equivocal. The frequent occurrence of burial mounds in the boundary clauses of charters does,⁷⁹ however, indicate that funerary features – whether ancient or more recent – would have been routinely encountered during the perambulation of boundaries. Moreover, these routes were ritualised symbolic journeys that, like mortuary processions, were concerned with prospective remembrance.⁸⁰

⁷² Nordeide 2013.

⁷³ Hooke 1998, 16; Brink 2013, 40.

⁷⁴ Carmichael *et al.* 1994; Anttonen 2013.

⁷⁵ Sauer 1954, 2–3.

⁷⁶ Brink 2013, 41; Semple 2013, 65.

⁷⁷ Brink 2013.

⁷⁸ Winchester 1990; Bonaventura 2007.

⁷⁹ Grinsell 1953, 103–6.

⁸⁰ Williams 2006, 196, 199–200.

Hilltops, ridges and escarpments

Archaeological and ethnographic studies have shown that, across periods and cultures, elevated places have been recurrently regarded as sacred or focal. In Wessex, monumental causewayed enclosures, such as Windmill Hill, Hambledon Hill and Maiden Castle, began to be constructed on hilltops in the early Neolithic; and, even before, in the pre-monumental Mesolithic, flint scatters were left in similar locations.⁸¹ Hilltops were undeniably an important element of both Anglo-Saxon and 'Romano-Celtic' pagan spiritual topography,⁸² which subsequently became incorporated into the early Christian ritual landscape. Across Anglo-Saxon England, *hearg* place-names, indicating a sanctuary or shrine in an elevated place, appear to be most often associated with morphologically striking hills.⁸³ As mentioned above, the continuing use or adaptation of 'Romano-Celtic' hilltop temple sites, such as Lamyatt Beacon and Pagan's Hill in Somerset, for worship or burial is attested from the late Roman period.⁸⁴ Whether this necessarily means that there was a degree of continuity in the sacred significance of these places, or whether new ideologies were superimposed upon them, is unclear.

The prominent summit of Glastonbury Tor was occupied in the late fifth or sixth century, possibly in the form of a monastic complex, indicating a strong attraction to elevated sites for early Christian religious communities, too, even in the apparent absence of pagan antecedents.⁸⁵ Turner has suggested that favoured locations for churches established in Wessex by the Late Anglo-Saxon period were not necessarily the highest or steepest hills but gentle hillocks or islands, often close to water, allowing them to be visible from various points in the surrounding landscape.⁸⁶ Likewise, in Kent, Everitt has observed that many hilltop churches are of relatively late foundation and may not, therefore, be associated directly with pagan concepts of 'high places'; rather, their positioning reflects the need for prominent landmarks in the densely wooded landscape.⁸⁷ It is now widely acknowledged, however, that elements of 'pagan' belief systems were not replaced wholesale by the introduction of Christianity, but that they were incorporated into a broader panoply of Anglo-Saxon religious practices. Certain more imaginative, ethereal connotations of hilltop sites may therefore have lingered on.

Hilltops form naturally powerful social arenas, which are enhanced further by human intervention and the addition of earthwork banks and ditches. Such locations were readily exploited, whether as foci of religious practice or as places of assembly or high-status secular settlement in post-Roman Britain. A small number of early English minsters of seventh- and eighth-century foundation are found within or adjacent to the ramparts of hillforts – including Malmesbury (Wiltshire),

⁸¹ Tilley 2010, 48–9.

⁸² Semple 2010, 27; 2013, 70.

⁸³ Semple 2007; 2013; 70–1.

⁸⁴ Rahtz 1951; Rahtz and Harris 1957; Leech 1986; Yorke 1995, 155.

⁸⁵ Rahtz 1991; Yorke 1995, 155.

⁸⁶ Turner 2006, 46.

⁸⁷ Everitt 1986, 295.

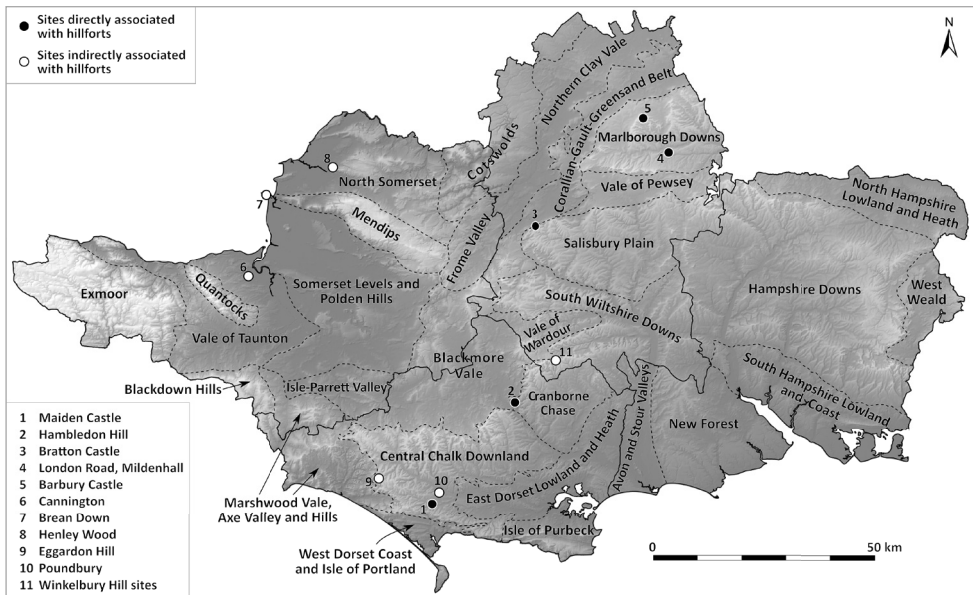


Figure 15. The distribution of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites associated with hillforts in the study area.

Breedon-on-the-Hill (Leicestershire) and Hanbury (Worcestershire) – but these are relatively few and far between. In contrast, there is a marked tradition of the ecclesiastical reuse of earthwork enclosures in Ireland,⁸⁸ and the reoccupation and reuse of hillforts is part of a distinctive repertoire belonging to the inhabitants of the western and south-western fringes of post-Roman Britain.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the funerary reuse of hillforts appears most prevalent in the western part of the study area – notably in Dorset, where groups of burials of ambiguous religious and cultural affiliation can be found in elevated locations associated with prehistoric enclosures (Figure 15). As mentioned in Chapter 1, thirteen Early or Middle Anglo-Saxon cemeteries or burial sites are associated with hillforts; five directly. This is a complex phenomenon discussed at various points in this book, probably stimulated by the combined impact of the natural topography and the cultural antecedents. That these burials date to the period of transition to West Saxon control of this area suggests that they are associated with a reinvigoration of interest in the Iron Age and Romano-British past, perhaps provoked by shifting political and cultural allegiances and an influx of new influences.

Slope and elevation: spatial patterns in the study area

A variety of topographical trends with respect to the positioning of burial sites on slopes and hills can be identified in our dataset. Throughout the study area, community cemeteries (groups of ten or more graves) are situated pri-

⁸⁸ Blair 2005, 190.

marily on the lower slopes of valleys. Those associated with earlier barrows tend likewise to follow this pattern, and there is a degree of consistency in the topographic positioning of these sites throughout the period of study. Some smaller cemeteries of later foundation are, however, also found in less accessible, higher-altitude locations.

Isolated individual burials occupy a wide variety of topographic positions, but are frequently situated on ridge-top watersheds, often close to ecclesiastical parish boundaries or routeways. Although furnished graves have been the focus of chronological refinement,⁸⁹ the dating of isolated intrusive barrow burials can still be vague, owing to the antiquarian nature of many of the discoveries. Nevertheless, secondary barrow burial has been shown in other areas to be a feature of the late sixth to late seventh centuries;⁹⁰ a pattern that is reflected here, too. These types of burial are overwhelmingly concentrated on the chalk downland of Wiltshire in the Marlborough Downs, Salisbury Plain, South Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase *pays* (although, as discussed in the previous chapter, this partly reflects the investigation history). Analysis of closely dated burial sites in Wiltshire reveals that the majority of these sites in general are located at altitudes above 100m aOD. If we take only seventh- to ninth-century sites, an even more substantial proportion are located at elevations higher than 100m. This apparent shift towards higher altitudes for the disposal of the dead in the seventh century echoes the findings of Lucy's study of East Yorkshire,⁹¹ and relates to a complex range of factors, including changes in agrarian systems as well as social organisation more broadly.

Hilltops and ridge-tops: exploring the funerary evidence

Some intriguing palimpsests of activity in hilltop and ridge-top locations can be found in the South Wiltshire Downs. Two narrow, sinuous parallel ridges – the Ebble–Nadder ridge to the north and the Ox Drove ridge to the south – extend westwards from the Salisbury Avon valley, terminating at Whitesheet Hill and Win Green Hill respectively. Towards the western end of the Ox Drove ridge, in an area that could be considered part of the northern reaches of Cranborne Chase, a prominent, steep-sided spur projects northwards into the Ebble valley (Figure 16). An Iron Age hillfort or promontory fort, known as Winkelbury, occupies its northern end. A group of six round barrows situated on the summit of Winkelbury Hill, midway along the spur, was excavated in the late nineteenth century by Augustus Pitt Rivers. Two of the barrows contained secondary early medieval inhumations, and a cemetery was also uncovered in their vicinity.⁹²

'Barrow 1' was the largest of the mounds and incorporated a causeway on its north-eastern side. It contained a large west–east grave in a central position, a metre deep in the chalk. The grave had previously been robbed and the skeleton had been badly disturbed. At each corner of the grave were postholes, indicating the former presence of standing posts or markers of some description. At the

⁸⁹ Hines and Bayliss 2013.

⁹⁰ Williams 1997; Lucy 1998; Semple 2003.

⁹¹ Lucy 1998, 88.

⁹² Pitt Rivers 1888.

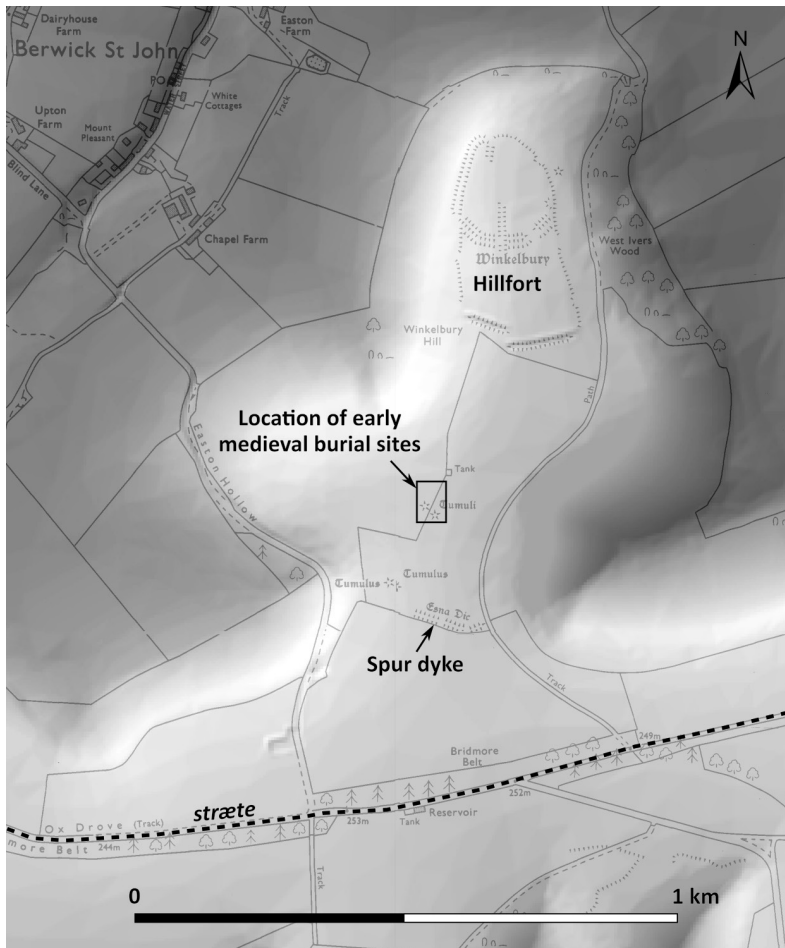


Figure 16. Winkelbury Hill, Wiltshire. (1980 OS map © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2018). All rights reserved)

undisturbed eastern end of the grave were fragments of iron that Pitt Rivers considered to be clamps from a coffin, although some of this metalwork exhibits similarities to the iron bed fittings found at Swallowcliffe Down (see below). Primary prehistoric funerary activity was implied by Bronze Age sherds within the mound and a bronze awl in the causeway. 'Barrow 2', a bowl barrow with a slight ditch and causeway, contained a grave paved with 'tabular flints', close to the surface and in a central position. Within the grave were two burials, one described as 'scattered through the soil', interpreted by Pitt Rivers as primary, and an extended west-east male interment with a tanged iron knife, interpreted as secondary.

Following the identification of a number of long, narrow depressions in the turf to the north and east of the barrows, further excavations by Pitt Rivers revealed a cemetery of thirty-one inhumations in shallow graves, including twenty-six adults with their heads to the west and two children with their heads to the east. The majority of the skeletons were in a supine extended position, although several were

interred on their sides. The finds, which suggest a seventh-century date, included six iron knives, a bronze pin, two bronze discs, a buckle and three glass beads. In one grave were iron rods and open-work fittings, perhaps from a chatelaine or satchel.

The Winkelbury Hill sites are located on a discrete promontory, cut off from the main Ox Drove ridge by a spur dyke, which is referred to in the mid-tenth-century bounds of Berwick St John as *esnadiche* or 'servants' ditch'.⁹³ The routeway that lends its name to Ox Drove ridge today is referred to as a *stræte* or 'made road' in the same charter, suggesting frequent and significant traffic along the ridge, at least by the Late Anglo-Saxon period. The self-contained and secluded, yet accessible, setting of Winkelbury spur perhaps further enhanced its status as a powerful spiritual locale.⁹⁴ There has been considerable debate as to the function and significance of cross dykes and spur dykes, a category of earthworks once decried as 'crazy meaningless things – monuments of apparently purposeless energy'.⁹⁵ Spur dykes have been variously interpreted as barriers, intended to control and divert human traffic or livestock, or as territorial or socio-political boundaries.⁹⁶ On the Ox Drove ridge, spur dykes are located in places that provide access from the Nadder valley up the escarpment onto the ridge, and it can be postulated that they were intended to mimic on a small scale and reinforce the natural boundaries formed by the escarpment, in places where it is breached by entrances.⁹⁷ Interestingly, earthworks of this category are also found on Cold Kitchen Hill, Swallowcliffe Down and Butser Hill – locations associated with early medieval funerary activity, as we will see shortly.

Just under 5km north-east of Winkelbury Hill, in the parish of Ebbesbourne Wake, Barrow Hill sits at the end of a spur that extends northwards from the Ox Drove ridge into the Ebble valley. An isolated male burial accompanied by a shield boss and three iron shield plates was found on the south-facing slope of the hill by workmen in the early 1920s. It was subsequently excavated by Clay, who found a spearhead by the right shoulder.⁹⁸ A barrow was also located c. 100m north-east of the burial.⁹⁹

There are approximately fifty round barrows along the Ox Drove ridge – an almost identical number to those along the Ebble–Nadder ridge – mostly situated near to the northern scarp.¹⁰⁰ By far the most detailed exploration of their topographical positioning has been carried out by Chris Tilley, who has suggested that the individual barrows and barrow groups were positioned in order to be intervisible with those occupying the ridge-top and southern spurs of the Ebble–Nadder ridge to the north – upon which Swallowcliffe Down is situated, albeit on the northern side (see below). There does not appear to have been such concern for visibility *between* nearby barrows or barrow groups on the Ox Drove ridge itself.

⁹³ S582; Grundy 1920, 33.

⁹⁴ Semple 2010, 27.

⁹⁵ Curwen 1951, 100, cited by Tilley 2010, 134.

⁹⁶ Curwen 1951; Bradley 1978; Fowler 1981; cf. Tilley 2010, 135–41.

⁹⁷ Sharples 2010, 51.

⁹⁸ Clay 1925a.

⁹⁹ Clay 1925b.

¹⁰⁰ Tilley 2010, 121.

Tilley has also noted a strong continuity in the locations used for barrow construction and burial along both of the ridges from the Early Bronze Age onwards, proposing that, 'Once barrows had been built, they attracted other barrows, and when barrows ceased to be built, they were reused over and over again as places of secondary burial, presenting the dead forever in the landscape and connecting past and present and future.'¹⁰¹ This strong prehistoric precedent for early medieval secondary barrow burial is not, of course, unusual. Throughout north-west Europe, the restoration, reinterpretation and reuse of existing mounds for secondary burial is recognised from the Middle Bronze Age onwards.¹⁰² Equally, we must not disregard the specific historical context of monument construction and reuse.

On Swallowcliffe Down, on the north-facing slope of the Ebble–Nadder ridge, a few kilometres to the north of Winkelbury and Barrow Hill, a Bronze Age barrow containing an isolated high-status seventh-century female burial was excavated in 1966 by Lance and Faith Vatcher (Figure 17).¹⁰³ This remains one of the richest Anglo-Saxon graves yet discovered in Wessex, and indeed one of the most important female burials uncovered in Britain to date.¹⁰⁴ In terms of its landscape context, the burial should be considered in conjunction with a near-contemporary, though probably slightly earlier, male inhumation found within a primary barrow at Alvediston, c. 250m to the south. In that low, ditched barrow was an extended inhumation accompanied by part of a Kimmeridge shale bracelet, an iron knife, a type SP3-a spearhead,¹⁰⁵ and a type SB5-a 'tall straight cone' shield boss,¹⁰⁶ all of which showed signs of 'ritual fracture'. The excavator also reported that 'six very large blocks of flint' had been 'intentionally placed' on top of the skeleton and had crushed the skull,¹⁰⁷ a practice known as stoning and considered a deviant burial custom.¹⁰⁸ The burial was interpreted as primary, as Iron Age pottery was discovered under the floor of the barrow, which had also truncated a probable Iron Age cattle-way. A ridge-top routeway along roughly the same line seems to have remained in use: part of the mid-tenth-century bounds of Swallowcliffe follow the ridgeway adjacent to the Alvediston burial, describing it as a *herpap*.¹⁰⁹

The Swallowcliffe Down and Alvediston sites are located at 220m and 219m aOD respectively, on the watershed formed by the Ebble–Nadder ridge. The boundaries of several hundreds and various parishes respect this watershed: the northern boundary of Stowford hundred and of Bishopstone (a detached part of Downton hundred) follow the Ebble–Nadder ridge-top, while parts of the southern boundaries of Dunworth and Cadworth hundreds, and of Compton Chamberlayne (a detached part of Damerham hundred), are also defined by it. Watersheds, at a range of scales, form natural social and territorial boundaries. The positioning of

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 103.

¹⁰² Holtorf 1998; Gerritsen 2003, 121; Bourgeois 2012, 165.

¹⁰³ Speake 1989.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 124; Williams 2006, 27. The assemblage and its significance has already been discussed in detail, and need not be repeated at length here.

¹⁰⁵ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 159–60.

¹⁰⁷ Clay 1926, 437.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds 2009, 81–5.

¹⁰⁹ S468.

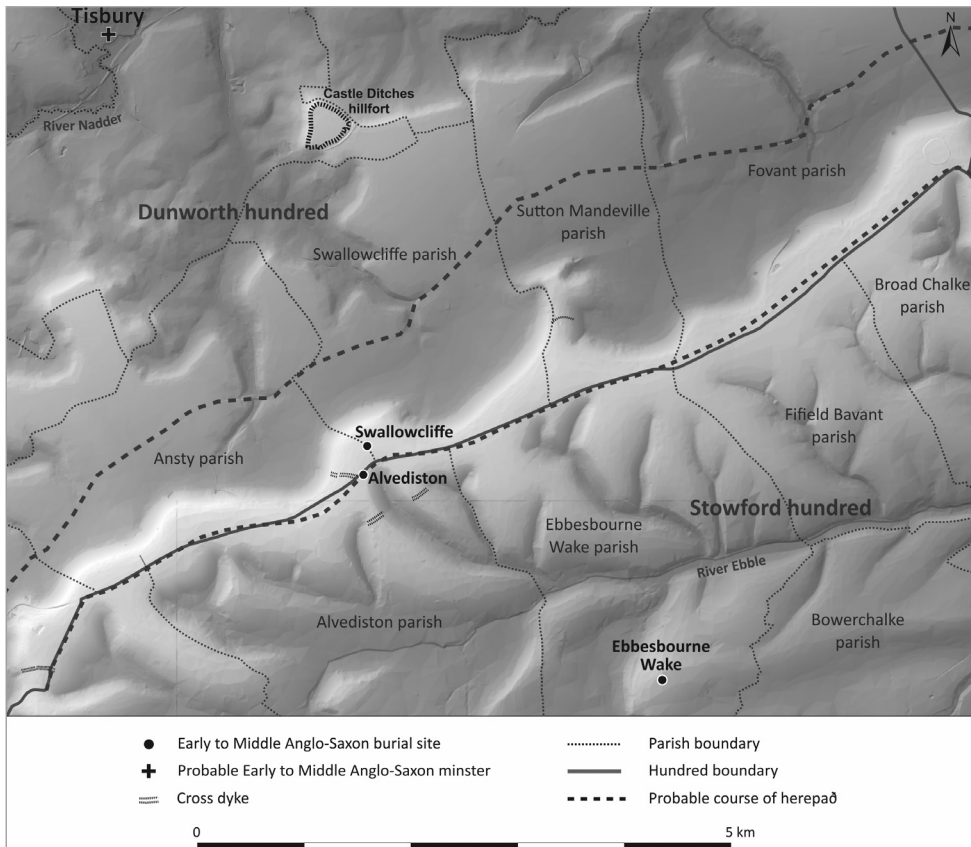


Figure 17. Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire.

groups of barrows and linear earthworks along watersheds during the Bronze Age in certain areas is considered to have served the role of delineating or reinforcing the boundaries between major territories.¹¹⁰ The Swallowcliffe site lies to the north of the hundred and parish boundary, while Alvediston lies to its south.

The closest Wessex parallel with Swallowcliffe Down is the site known as Roundway Hill 7, located in a similarly elevated topographic position at the western extremity of the Marlborough Downs, c. 40km north of Swallowcliffe. This burial should also be considered as part of a group of four early medieval funerary sites, all associated with barrows (although two of these may be contemporary with the burials), within a 1km radius of a central point (Figure 18). The easternmost spur of the Marlborough Downs, Beacon Hill, projects out into the greensand valley to the west, and is flanked by Kings Play Hill to the north-east and Roundway Hill to the south-east. A central sunken plateau lies to the east of Beacon Hill, dividing Kings Play Hill and Roundway Hill. Three of the burial sites lie on or to the north of Roundway Hill, between 203 and 206m aOD, and one is on Kings

¹¹⁰ Spratt 1989.

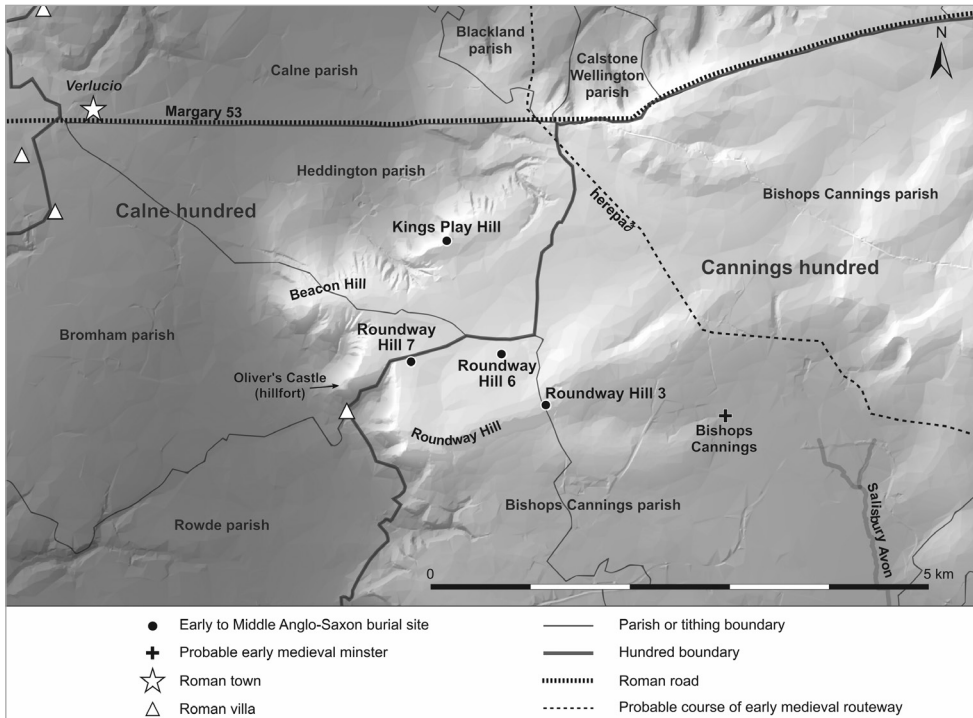


Figure 18. Roundway Hill, Wiltshire.

Play Hill at 230m aOD. The Roundway Hill sites are referred to by Cunington's classification numbers.¹¹¹

A bowl barrow, Roundway Hill 7, was first opened in 1840 by Lord Colston and Stoughton Money, revealing an extended female inhumation accompanied by exceptionally rich grave-goods, which included a cabochon garnet and gold necklace, a composite gold pin-suite and a yew-wood bucket with bronze fittings, all contained within an iron-bound wooden coffin or chest. Iron mounts found within the grave raise the possibility that it was a bed burial, although the fittings may originate from a coffin. While it has previously been argued that this assemblage indicates a late seventh-century date,¹¹² refined dating would now place the burial slightly earlier, probably near the beginning of the third quarter of the seventh century.¹¹³ Semple and Williams carried out a programme of reinvestigation in 2001, including geophysical survey and further excavations, a significant discovery of which was that the original Bronze Age burial had been removed or destroyed in the early medieval period and its chamber possibly enlarged.¹¹⁴ Two additional crouched Bronze Age burials were also located on the chalk floor of the inner ditch: an adult contemporary with the monument near the north-west terminal, and a

¹¹¹ Cunington 1860.

¹¹² Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 48–9.

¹¹³ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 507.

¹¹⁴ Semple and Williams 2001.

later juvenile burial near the south-west terminal. A further Bronze Age cremation had been inserted into the outer ditch, and another at the north-west terminal of the inner ditch adjacent to the crouched adult.

Approximately 1.4km south-east of Roundway Hill 7, a round barrow known as Roundway Hill 3, variously interpreted as Bronze Age or early medieval in construction, was first excavated by William Cunnington senior in 1805. He located a west-east-orientated inhumation accompanied by an iron ring, thirty ivory gaming pieces and a possible shield boss. It was reopened in 1855 by William Cunnington junior, and a disinterred skeleton was recovered, identified by Thurnam as a roughly fifty-year-old male of Roman or later date.¹¹⁵ The barrow is adjacent to the boundary between two tithings of Bishops Cannings, and 'Boundary Mounds' are marked on the first edition OS map. Numerous round barrows are located on the ridge to the north-east of this one, but this is the only one on a boundary. This raises the question as to whether the boundary predates the burial. This site is also the only one of the Roundway Hill group to be situated on the edge of the chalk escarpment, and thus benefits from far-reaching views and potential visibility from settlements in the valley below, although it is barely discernible from Bishops Cannings.

Cunnington also investigated two conjoined round barrows located 700m north-west of Roundway Hill 3.¹¹⁶ In the easterly of the barrows, Roundway Hill 6, he found a shallow apparently unaccompanied interment that had been subjected to considerable disturbance and was interpreted as secondary early medieval, in addition to a prehistoric cremation in a cist and a Bronze Age inhumation. The northernmost site in this group, on Kings Play Hill, Heddington, a barrow containing the inhumation of an adult male and thirty-six iron nails (suggesting the former presence of a wooden coffin), was interpreted as primary.¹¹⁷ The barrow lies in the hundred of Calne, just under a kilometre from the boundary with Cannings. It overlooks the plateau on which Roundway Hill 6 and 7 are located, and is 25m higher in altitude, and could thus perhaps be seen as 'presiding' over these sites.

How, then, can we compare, contrast and contextualise the broadly contemporary groups of funerary sites at Swallowcliffe and Roundway? Both are located on White Chalk geology in elevated locations, although the Roundway Hill sites are situated around the edges of a sunken plateau formed by a spur, rather than atop a ridge. Both lie close to the western limit of culturally 'Anglo-Saxon' funerary evidence in the seventh century, during which time the burials are thought to have been deposited.¹¹⁸ 'Elite' female burials of the type represented at Swallowcliffe Down and Roundway Hill 7 are rare, but are nevertheless part of a distinct phenomenon, beginning around the second quarter of the seventh century, that is manifested in other areas of England, too.¹¹⁹ The social status and possible role of

¹¹⁵ Cunnington 1860, 159–61.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162–4.

¹¹⁷ Cunnington 1910.

¹¹⁸ Yorke 2010, 82.

¹¹⁹ Approximately a dozen examples of certain or possible bed burials are known in, many from cemeteries, such as Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire (Malim and Hines 1998); Loftus, North Yorkshire (Sherlock 2012); and Shrubland Hall, Suffolk (Penn 2011).

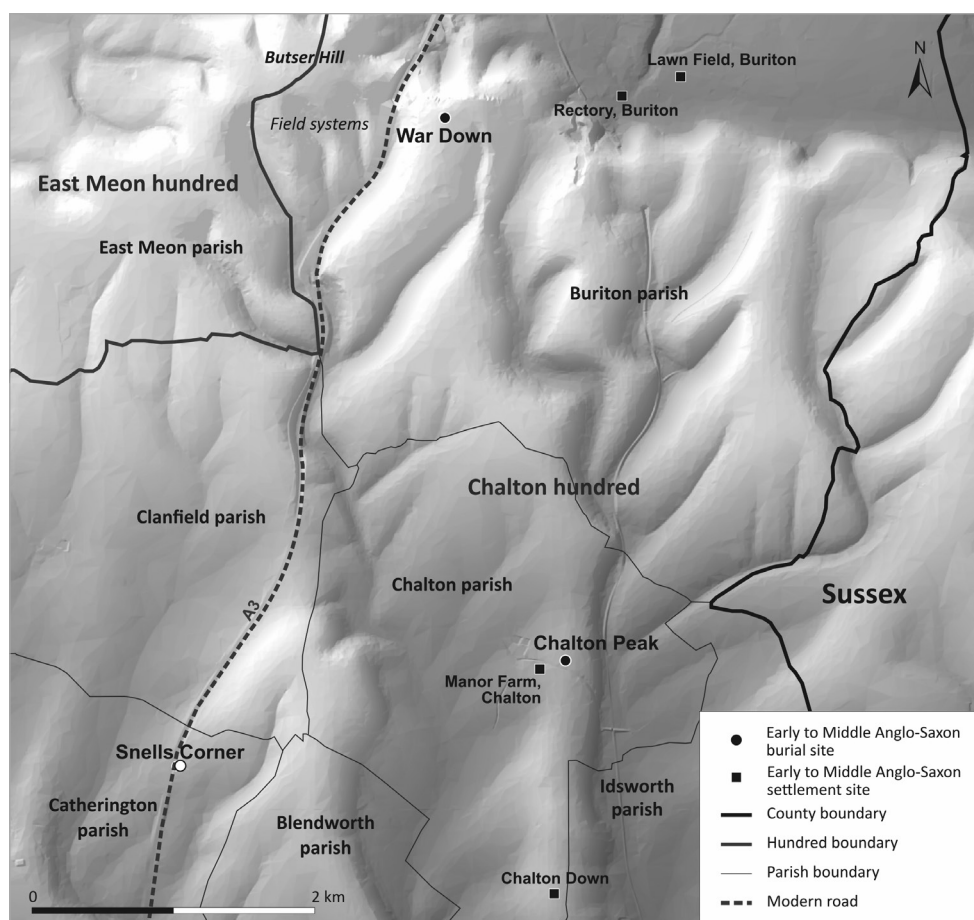


Figure 19. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites and settlements in the putative *Meonware* area of south-east Hampshire.

these women, and how they became part of this Wessex downland funerary milieu, is explored further in the coming chapters.

Moving to the south-eastern part of the study area, a noteworthy group of funerary sites that make use of prominent topographic positions and/or places of antecedent significance can be found on the south-eastern edge of the Hampshire Downs *pays* (Figure 19). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the territory of the *Meonware*, focused on the Meon valley and the western limits of the South Downs towards the Hampshire/Sussex border, is considered to have encompassed this area. At War Down, Buriton, a series of finds suggestive of sixth- or seventh-century funerary activity was found within and close to a bowl barrow between the 1930s and the 1970s.¹²⁰ The site lies at an altitude of 244m aOD, on the summit of a north-south ridge that forms part of the South Downs range of chalk hills. Butser Hill, on the

¹²⁰ Cunliffe 1975.

adjacent ridge to the west, is the second highest point in Hampshire, at 270m. The crest of War Down has been planted with conifers and deciduous trees since its acquisition by the Forestry Commission in the 1920s, but prior to that there is no evidence to suggest it had been anything other than open downland. Although now obscured by vegetation, in the early medieval period the site may therefore have commanded panoramic views towards the West Sussex border to the east, the coast to the south and Petersfield to the north.

Several settlements dating from the Middle Anglo-Saxon period or earlier have been identified in the vicinity of War Down. The exceptional ridge-top 'village' of Chalton Down, 5km to the south, which incorporated sixty-one separate buildings dating from the sixth to seventh centuries, was excavated in the 1970s.¹²¹ Cunliffe has suggested that the dispersed nature of the finds from War Down implies the presence of a cemetery.¹²² If this is the case, it provides a striking contrast to the valley setting of other community cemeteries in Hampshire. The settlement on Chalton Down provides compelling evidence that Early Anglo-Saxon communities inhabited elevated, as well as valley-based, permanent settlements in this part of Hampshire,¹²³ although this is still exceedingly rare on the chalk downland. It is possible that the funerary activity on War Down postdates the abandonment of the Chalton Down settlement in the mid-seventh century, or that it represents an isolated burial or small group of burials associated with a valley-based settlement, such as at Buriton, where Early Anglo-Saxon settlement activity has also been identified.¹²⁴

At Chalton Peak, 1.6km north of the Early Anglo-Saxon settlement on Chalton Down and 200m east of the middle to Late Anglo-Saxon settlement at Manor Farm, Chalton,¹²⁵ metal detecting in 2002 revealed a shield boss and spearheads,¹²⁶ and subsequent geophysical survey produced a number of anomalies interpreted as graves. A small-scale excavation followed, resulting in the discovery of an adult female inhumation burial in a north-south grave with a fragment of early medieval pottery, and traces of a second grave. The site lies at 119m aOD, on the same north-south ridge as the Chalton Down settlement, overlooking the modern village of Chalton. Considering its proximity to Manor Farm, an association with this later settlement is plausible. However, the grave-goods, and the fact that the site is located on the same ridgeway as Chalton Down and in a comparable topographic position to War Down, suggest contemporaneity, if not association, with the earlier settlement.

The third site in this group is Snell's Corner, 2.7km west of Chalton Down, where a multi-period cemetery was found to be associated with a large disc barrow or 'platform barrow' during road improvement works in 1947.¹²⁷ The site lies at c. 125m aOD on the south-west-facing slope of Horndean Down, beneath the loftier heights

¹²¹ Addyman *et al.* 1972; Addyman and Leigh 1973.

¹²² Cunliffe 1975, 60.

¹²³ Arnold and Wardle 1981.

¹²⁴ HHER 34591.

¹²⁵ Hughes 1984.

¹²⁶ Keyte 2003.

¹²⁷ Knocker 1955.

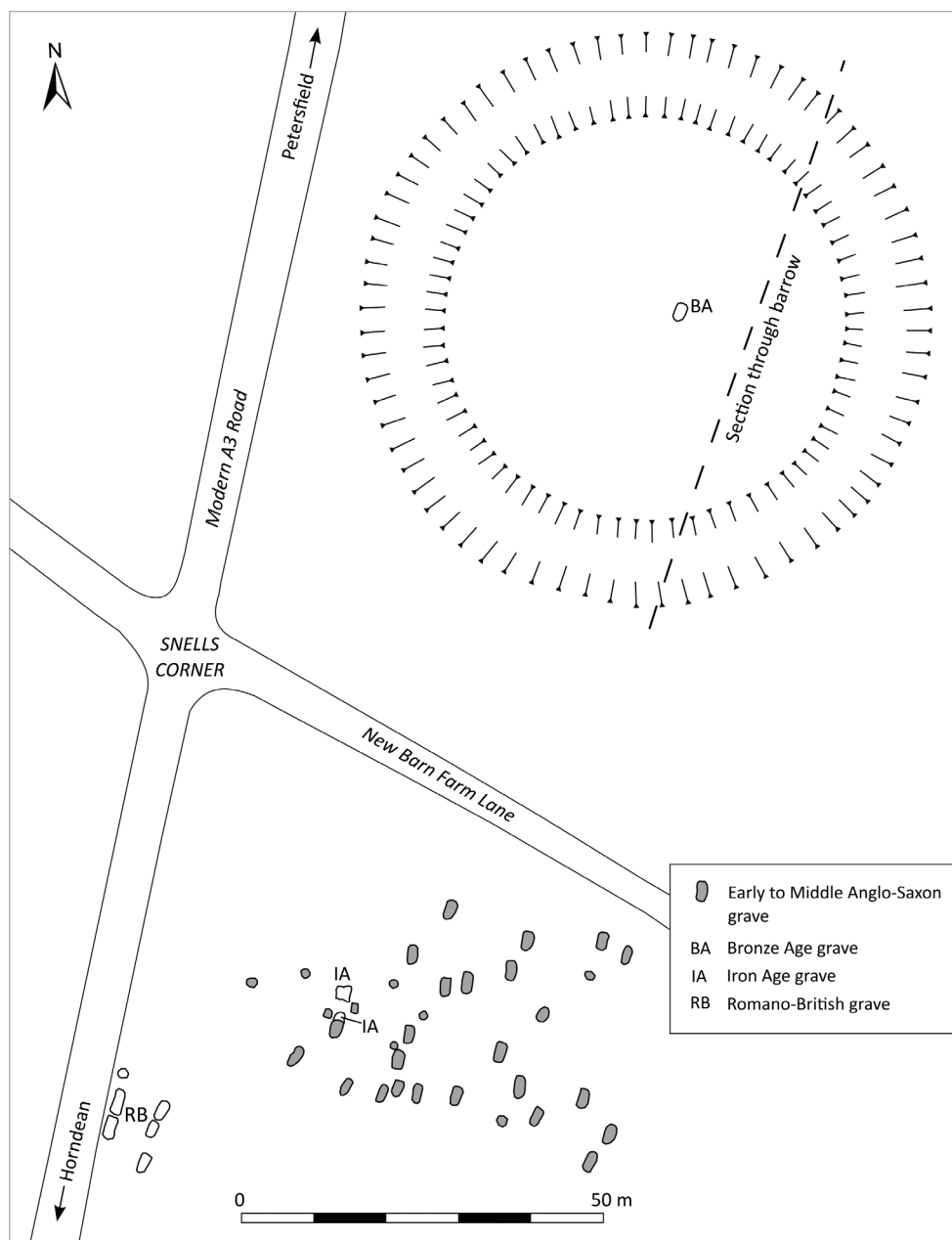


Figure 20. Plan of Snell's Corner cemetery (redrawn after Knocker 1955, figure 2).

of Windmill Hill. Thirty-three early medieval burials of a probable seventh-century date were found, together with ten other inhumations: six Romano-British, three Iron Age and one tentatively Bronze Age (Figure 20). The barrow, which had a diameter of 60m, contained a primary unaccompanied crouched inhumation and was initially considered to be of Early Bronze Age construction but may potentially

belong to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age.¹²⁸ The other burials lay c. 50m south-south-west of the barrow, beyond a modern minor road which may have destroyed evidence of further graves. The feet of the early medieval individuals were pointing towards the barrow, perhaps in veneration of the monument. There were three shallow Iron Age graves within the same group, one of which had been cut by an early medieval grave, removing the upper part of the skeleton. The Romano-British burials formed a separate group, 15m to the south-west.

Is it possible, then, that the Romano-British cemetery was still perceptible when the site was reused, or that local communities retained knowledge of the cemetery for up to 300 years? Although this is a considerable time interval, and no evidence of post-built structures or grave markers were discovered in the Romano-British cemetery, their close proximity to the early medieval burials, combined with a lack of intercutting, indicates some awareness of their existence. The disturbance of one of the Iron Age graves, however, suggests that the presence of these two burials was not recognised or recognisable in the early medieval period.

Further to the south, in the South Hampshire Lowland and Coast *pays*, the prominent west-east chalk ridge of Portsdown Hill presents a stark contrast to its surroundings, affording clear views over Portsmouth and the Solent from an elevation of c. 130m aOD in an otherwise low-lying landscape. A line of cemeteries dating from the seventh to tenth centuries – Portsdown I, Portsdown II George Inn, Portsdown Hill Long Barrow and Bevis's Grave – are situated along the eastern half of the ridge (Figure 21). The first three sites are located on the summit of the ridge, which falls away especially sharply to the south. However, Bevis's Grave, a now destroyed long barrow found to contain seventy-one early medieval graves,¹²⁹ is sited on a gentle slope at the eastern end of the ridge, facing towards Hayling Island, the location of a 'Romano-Celtic' temple. Indeed, the Roman road linking this island with *Claesentum* and *Venta Belgarum* (Margary 421) passes 600m to the north of Bevis's Grave, immediately to the south of a villa site. A possible cobbled Roman road surface cut by the early medieval burials was also found to follow the long barrow ditch.¹³⁰ Still, the connection with the Hayling Island temple site, 4km distant to the south-east, is fairly tenuous.

I have already drawn attention to the seventh-century proliferation of funerary activity associated with hillforts, temples and other elevated places of Romano-British or Iron Age significance in areas that became subject to West Saxon influence around this time. The Upper Wylde or Deverill valley in the South Wiltshire Downs forms part of this putative peripheral zone in terms of culturally 'Anglo-Saxon' evidence. At Monkton Deverill, fifteen roughly west-east graves, probably part of a more extensive cemetery, were uncovered during pipeline construction in 1989–90.¹³¹ The site is located on a low bluff, in a narrow gap in which the

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹²⁹ See Chapter 1, pp. 41–2. The name of this long barrow recalls the eponymous hero of Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances, Sir Bevis of Hampton (Southampton), who features prominently in the folklore of prehistoric sites in this part of southern Hampshire and West Sussex (Grinsell 1976, 44).

¹³⁰ Rudkin 1976.

¹³¹ Rawlings 1995.

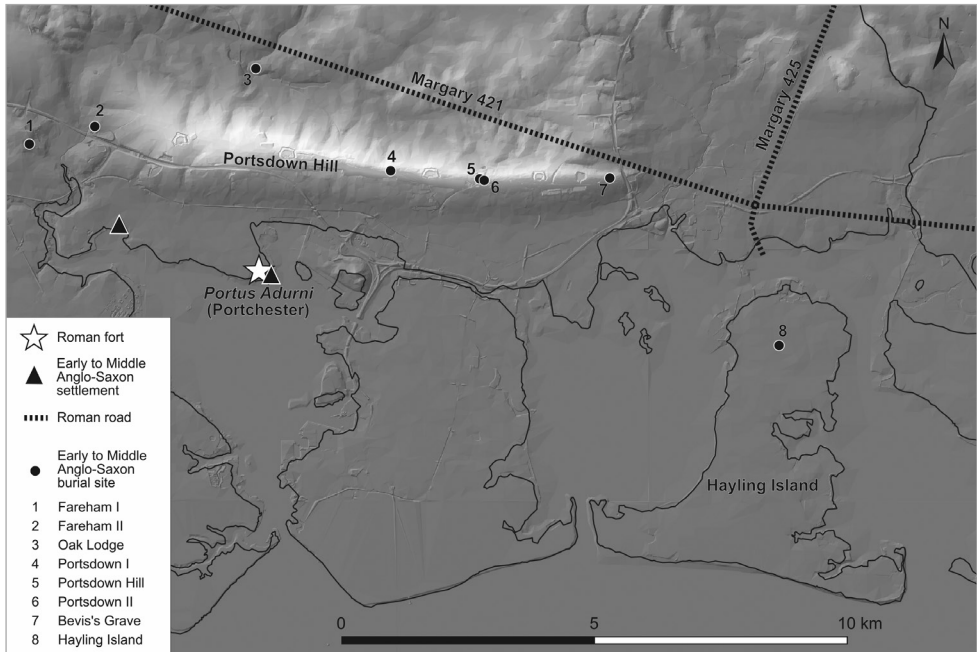


Figure 21. Portsdown Hill and Hayling Island, Hampshire.

river passes between a ridge to the north-west and the larger expanse of elevated plateau to the south and east. A 'Romano-Celtic' temple was located 2.5km to the north-west on Whitecliff Down, on the summit of the ridge, the slopes of which are traversed by cross dykes. This temple is thought to have been situated on the boundary between the *civitates* of the Belgae and the Durotriges, and possibly also the Dobunni.¹³² During the seventh century, when the Monkton Deverill cemetery is likely to have been in use, the area is thought to have marked the western periphery of West Saxon influence. A ring-ditch encircled both the primary inhumation of an extended supine adult male in Grave 736 and the secondary burial of a partially flexed juvenile aged between seven and nine years in Grave 733, the head to the north-east – the opposite direction to the other burials (Figure 22). Apart from a couple of pottery and glass sherds, the only 'grave-good', found adjacent to the left forearm of the child in Grave 733, was a probable Böhner Type D seventh-century knife. Some of the graves had partial stone linings, including masonry 'almost certainly reused from a nearby Romano-British building'.¹³³ In this respect parallels can be drawn with Ulwell and Worth Matravers on the Isle of Purbeck, where at the latter site some of the grave linings were constructed of Roman roofing tiles and Purbeck limestone masonry.¹³⁴

Further instances include, in Dorset, the cemetery within the causewayed enclosure at Hambledon Hill; the trio of burials within an earlier round barrow beside

¹³² Eagles 2001, 214; 2004, 236.

¹³³ Draper 2006, 153.

¹³⁴ Ladle 2012.

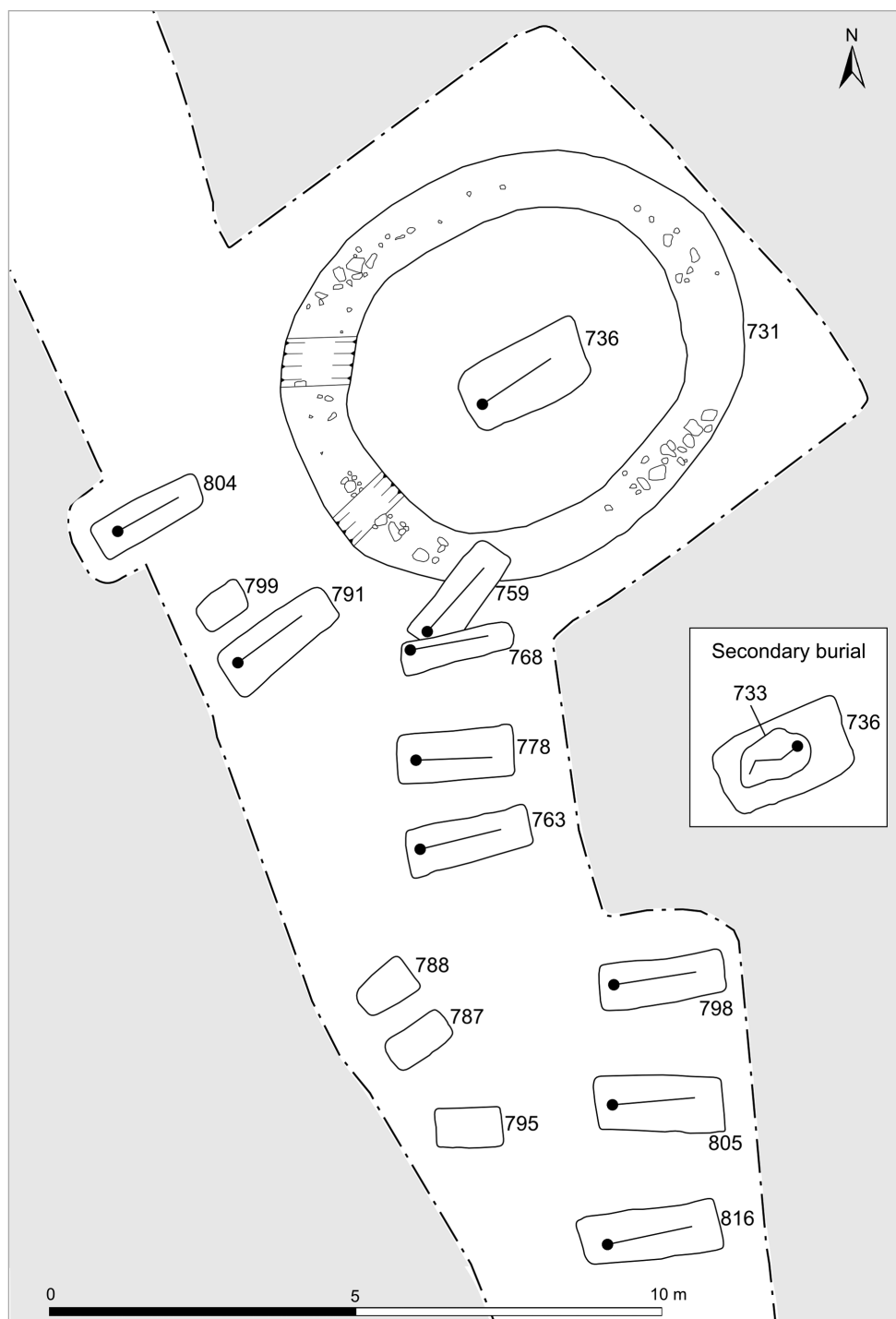


Figure 22. Plan of Monkton Deverill cemetery, Wiltshire (redrawn after Rawlings 1995, figure 3).

a Roman road to the south-east of Eggardon hillfort; and the burials in close proximity to the 'Romano-Celtic' temple within the ramparts of Maiden Castle. These examples, all probably seventh-century or later in date, betray ambiguous cultural connotations and, while they may represent the interments of 'native Britons', categorisation is problematic. Whether or not it is possible to infer ethnicity or cultural identity from such burials is one of the lines of enquiry pursued in Chapter 3.

Escarpments: exploring the funerary evidence

A topographical formation closely related to hills and ridges, but distinctive in terms of landscape character and visual impact, is the escarpment. This is defined here as a slope that separates two relatively level land masses of differing elevations, such as at the edge of a plateau. This change in elevation often also marks the boundary between geological formations, soils and agricultural regimes, creating a particular set of conditions. The frequent 'skylining' of Bronze Age barrows on the false crests of scarps, to enable them to be seen from below, was first recognised by the antiquarian William Stukeley and later discussed by Cyril Fox, who postulated that the locations of contemporary settlements could thus be traced in the valley beneath the monuments by following the line of sight.¹³⁵ As regards the early medieval landscape, a propensity towards the placement of funerary sites along the upper edges of escarpments has been discussed in recent regional studies of East Yorkshire and West Sussex.¹³⁶ While intervisibility with the valley below is again argued to have been a key concern, the significance of escarpments as frequently traversed and liminal zones, marking the interface between different land-use regimes, is also strongly emphasised.

A remarkable pattern in the distribution of sixth- and seventh-century burial sites can be identified along the upper edge of the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire. This scarp marks the interface between the clay valley to the north and the chalk downland to the south, with an intermediary band of greensand and gault underlying the lower slope and base of the scarp (Figure 23). This positioning was recognised by Semple in her study of the Avebury region, whereby two burial sites – Thornhill and Basset Down – were said to be located 'to take advantage of extensive views of the clay vale', the former also exploiting 'a prominent ancient monument, which would have been readily identifiable from the valley bottom'.¹³⁷ To these two sites a further three can now be added.

The easternmost known site in this group is Callas Hill I in the parish of Wanborough. Here, the inhumation of a 'young Saxon', with a sixth- or seventh-century spearhead and a broken iron knife, was found in 1927 adjacent to Roman Ermin Street, 'four feet deep in chalk and covered by another four feet of rainwash from the hillside'.¹³⁸ The site is located just below the summit of the scarp at 152m aOD, at the crossroads between the Roman road and the *icen hilde*

¹³⁵ Fox 1942, 22; Piggott 1950, 71; cf. Grinsell 1953, 51.

¹³⁶ Lucy 1998; Semple 2008; 2013, 24.

¹³⁷ Semple 2003, 76.

¹³⁸ Goddard 1928, 91; Passmore 1928, 244.

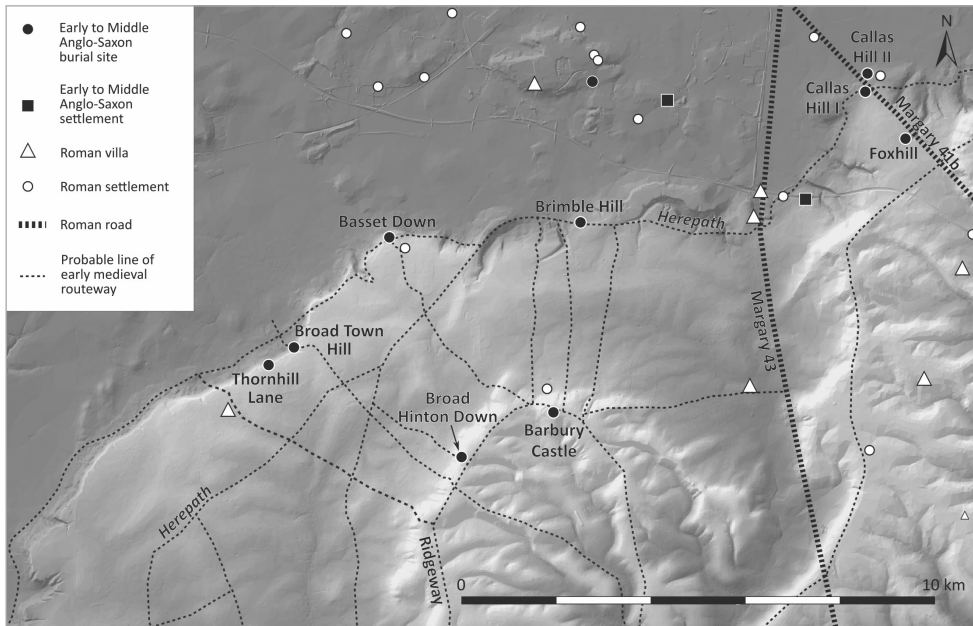


Figure 23. The distribution of sites and routeways along the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs.

weg, 'Icknield Way', mentioned in the eleventh-century bounds of Wanborough.¹³⁹ The same bounds also refer to *haeðenan byriels* where the latter routeway meets the eastern boundary of Wanborough, 500m to the east.

Moving along the scarp, 6.5km to the south-west of Callas Hill I, at Brimble Hill in Wroughton, excavations prompted by metal-detector finds in 2000 produced two late sixth-century inhumations.¹⁴⁰ One was an 'elderly' male accompanied by a sword, two spearheads, a shield boss and a buckle, and the other a child with a pair of gilded saucer brooches and two amber or glass beads. The site lies at 163m aOD on the false crest of the slope when viewed from Wroughton, or *Ellendun*, which is named in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as the location for a battle between the kings of Wessex and Mercia in AD 825.¹⁴¹ Although this episode of conflict took place at least 200 years after the Brimble Hill interments were made, the *Chronicle* gives the impression that the north Wiltshire area was already a contested zone by the sixth century, as battles are recorded at sites such as Barbury Castle in AD 556 and at Dyrham, Gloucestershire, in 577.¹⁴²

Four kilometres to the west, another pair of sixth-century burials was found in 1822 in the grounds of the Basset Down estate, in the ecclesiastical parish of Wroughton.¹⁴³ Human remains were discovered when work was carried out to

¹³⁹ S1588.

¹⁴⁰ Pollard 2002, 291.

¹⁴¹ ASC 825; Gover *et al.* 1939, 278.

¹⁴² ASC 556, 577.

¹⁴³ Goddard 1895.

level ground on the steep chalk escarpment south of Basset Down House, and two adult inhumations were found side-by-side (although it is not clear whether they occupied the same grave), with grave-goods including part of a shield, a spear, a knife, saucer brooches and a large number of amber beads.¹⁴⁴ Further skeletons were reportedly found to the west during the 1830s. Roman material, including pottery and quernstones, was also unearthed, indicating the likelihood of a nearby Roman building or settlement. This site also lies on the false crest of the escarpment, in a similar topographic position to that on Brimble Hill.

A further three kilometres to the south-west along the escarpment, the inhumation of a male of thirty-five to forty-five years, radiocarbon dated to the sixth or seventh century,¹⁴⁵ was found on Broad Town Hill in 2000.¹⁴⁶ The burial was located on a steep slope, at just under 200m aOD, with wide-ranging views over the clay vale to the north. It also lay near the boundary between the hundreds of Selkley, Blagrove and Kingsbridge, and close to several trackways, at least one of which has been suggested to have early medieval origins.¹⁴⁷ Bob Clarke has argued that the shallow grave, absence of grave-goods and 'crossroads' location are indicative of outcast status and a possible execution burial.¹⁴⁸ The loss of the upper part of the body and any potential grave-goods could, however, be explained by the fact that the grave was located on a steep incline and had been subject to considerable erosion.

Provided that the radiocarbon date is correct, the burial predates the period in which the exclusion and distancing of deviant individuals from the communal cemetery space became commonplace. Deviant burials seem to have been integrated into conventional fifth- to seventh-century cemeteries, albeit often placed in a peripheral location and sometimes separated from the main area by an earlier linear feature, as is the case at Portway East, Hampshire.¹⁴⁹ This spatial isolation of such individuals at the scale of cemetery organisation does, however, suggest that there was an emerging awareness of the concept of segregating or ostracising the 'suspicious dead' over the course of the Early Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Reynolds has argued that increasing evidence for isolated 'outcast' burials of seventh-century date can indeed be identified, especially in boundary locations, and it is possible that the Broad Town burial fits into this class. Its proximity to the boundary between the hundreds of Kingsbridge and Blagrove, which runs perpendicular to the chalk escarpment, less than 150m west of the burial, may be of significance. The hundred boundary between Blagrove and Selkley does, however, merely respect the topography, following the line of the escarpment, and the burial is in a comparable location with other, non-deviant, isolated burials along the Grey Chalk shelf of the Marlborough Downs. Furthermore, the severely eroded state of the grave precludes the drawing of any firm conclusions regarding the burial position or the presence or absence of grave-goods.

¹⁴⁴ See Semple 2003, 86.

¹⁴⁵ AD 540–680, at 95.4 per cent probability.

¹⁴⁶ Clarke 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004.

¹⁴⁷ Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 225.

¹⁴⁸ Clarke 2004.

¹⁴⁹ Reynolds 2009, 201–2.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.



Plate 3. View from the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs, near Thornhill Lane. Photo by author.

Six hundred metres south-west of Broad Town Hill, at the top of the escarpment, an indeterminate number of inhumations were found in the early nineteenth century within a bowl barrow near Thornhill Lane, Cliffe Pypard.¹⁵¹ Located close to the surface of the mound, the burials were interpreted as intrusive, and accompanying finds included a spearhead and amber and glass beads. The amber beads indicate a sixth- or possibly seventh-century date for the burials.¹⁵² At just under 200m aOD, the site lies in a commanding location overlooking the valley below (Plate 3). The barrow is situated close to the parish boundary, although, as discussed for Broad Town Hill, this merely follows the line of the scarp.

At Cuff's Corner, just over a kilometre south-west of the Thornhill Lane site, the remains of around five early medieval organic-tempered pottery vessels were found on the site of a Roman villa, suggesting continuity of use, or reuse, of the settlement site.¹⁵³ The settlement at Cuff's Corner lies in a similar topographic position and altitude to Thornhill Lane barrow, and it is possible that there is an association between the two sites. The funerary activity at Thornhill Lane could, however, equally be associated with a settlement on the greensand at the base of the escarpment. Nine inhumations beneath 'large sarsen stones' were found to the north of the villa in 1854 and were considered by Goddard to be 'Late Celtic or Romano-British'.¹⁵⁴ Although stoning – the apparent weighing-down of corpses with large stones – is relatively rare in Early Anglo-Saxon contexts, sixty-five examples from

¹⁵¹ Anon. 1860, 256; 1897, 86.

¹⁵² White 1988, 17.

¹⁵³ Smith 1978, 136.

¹⁵⁴ Goddard 1913, 227.

twenty sites, including Alvediston (see above), have been identified,¹⁵⁵ and it is possible that this cemetery also belongs to the period of study.

Mirroring the pattern described above along the Upper Greensand/Grey Chalk interface, two further sites have been located on the prominent White Chalk shelf towards the interior of the Marlborough Downs plateau to the south. Within the ramparts of Barbury Castle hillfort, iron knives, a spearhead and a sixth- or seventh-century seax were found prior to 1934, but no associated burials were located,¹⁵⁶ raising the possibility that the finds represent votive depositions or a hoard.¹⁵⁷ Several skeletons were found within the ramparts during the Second World War, but these were located at some distance from the earlier finds. The battle of *Beran burh* or 'Bera's stronghold', assigned to AD 556, is believed to have taken place at Barbury Castle.¹⁵⁸ The bounds of *Ellendun* in a charter dated AD 956 mention *ealhæræs byrgelse*,¹⁵⁹ 'Ealhere's burial place', which may be located within the hillfort or among the tumuli to the west.¹⁶⁰ An inhumation and iron spearhead were found within a bowl barrow on Broad Hinton Down, just over 2km south-west of Barbury Castle and in a similar topographic position, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.¹⁶¹

Additionally, a similar pattern can perhaps be identified on the northern escarpment of Salisbury Plain, although the sites in question are imprecisely dated. On Strawberry Hill, at the eastern end of a Grey Chalk ridge, overlooking Market Lavington from c. 2.5km to the south-east, a few sporadic finds, including a black glass bead, a sword and human bone, were made during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁶² A probable barrow has been identified on the false crest of the western slope that overlooks Market Lavington¹⁶³ and, although the precise locations of the early medieval findspots are unknown, it could be speculated that the finds were associated with burials in such a barrow, which was perhaps visible from the settlement below. As the finds have been only broadly dated to the fifth to eighth centuries, however, it is impossible to determine how any potential burials relate temporally to the settlement at Market Lavington.

Nine kilometres to the west, in a location and circumstances similar to the Barbury Castle site, an inhumation accompanied by an axe and a sword was found by Jeffery Whittaker within a possible bowl barrow at the southern entrance to Bratton Castle hillfort, at the top of the White Chalk escarpment. Whittaker's excavations at Bratton Castle in the eighteenth century are thought to be some of the earliest in Wiltshire and the recording was, at best, limited. Cunnington later found three skeletons near the surface of a long barrow in the centre of the hillfort, about 150m to the north-west, although no dating evidence was recovered.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁵ Reynolds 2009, 81.

¹⁵⁶ Meaney 1964, 265.

¹⁵⁷ Semple 2003, 88; 2013, 78.

¹⁵⁸ ASC 556.

¹⁵⁹ S585.

¹⁶⁰ Grundy 1920, 54–5.

¹⁶¹ Grinsell 1957, 162.

¹⁶² Cunnington 1933, 172.

¹⁶³ Wiltshire and Swindon HER ST95SE603.

¹⁶⁴ Hoare 1812, 55.

Springs and wells

The veneration of springs and wells – in their natural and human-altered forms – is recognised as a facet of pre- and early Christian ritual cognition that in many cases may have survived into the medieval period, materialised as part of church complexes and cult sites. There is evidence to suggest, for example, that the siting of the church at Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, was influenced by ‘the existence nearby of a pagan and, latterly, Christian, religious site at the holy well’.¹⁶⁵ Likewise, at Wells, Somerset, the minster church was sited in the vicinity of a group of springs that had been harnessed since the Romano-British period, if not earlier. The most northerly of these springs, which formed the focus of the late Roman mausoleum, was dedicated to St Andrew and perhaps adapted for baptismal purposes during the conversion.¹⁶⁶ A long-lived early medieval cemetery site, in use on a cyclical basis between the seventh and eleventh centuries, has been excavated between the former mausoleum (later the mortuary chapel) and the main body of the minster.¹⁶⁷ Shapwick Old Church, Somerset – also dedicated to St Andrew – occupied the site of a Roman religious or ritual complex associated with a nearby spring, the finds assemblage from which displayed parallels with temple sites such as Brean Down, Henley Wood and Lamyatt Beacon.¹⁶⁸

Beyond Wessex, too, many early churches and important early centres are closely associated with springheads and wells. In Kent, examples include Canterbury, Lyminge and Maidstone, among numerous others, although, as Everitt has cautioned, in most cases ‘proof of sanctity needs further investigation’.¹⁶⁹ Occasionally, though, the evidence is less equivocal: the topographic context of some Kentish spring-head churches is powerfully suggestive of pre-existing religious connotations. A case in point is Stone-by-Faversham, where the church ‘incorporated part of a fourth-century Romano-British mausoleum’, while, at Lullingstone, a chapel was ‘built directly over the pagan cult-room of the Roman villa with its springs devoted to the worship of local water-nymphs’.¹⁷⁰

In addition to their incorporation into formalised venues of Christian worship, wells and springs continued to stimulate ritual or cultic activity at more ‘informal’ vernacular sites in the landscape,¹⁷¹ as evidenced by references to places such as the *halgan welle* or *wylle* that appears in the bounds of Ruishton, Somerset.¹⁷² Of course, the fact that these names are recorded in Late Anglo-Saxon charters does not, in itself, provide definitive evidence that particular places had religious connotations in the preceding centuries, and we must approach with degree of scepticism in the absence of reliable early evidence. On a general level, nevertheless, it is certainly possible to argue for a *longue durée* of reverence for springs and wells, stretching

¹⁶⁵ Haslam 1984, 90.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁶⁷ Rodwell 2001, 72.

¹⁶⁸ Corcos 2002; Aston and Gerrard 2013.

¹⁶⁹ Everitt 1986, 297.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁷¹ Morris 1989; Yorke 1995, 156; Blair 2005, 473; Semple 2010, 30, 33.

¹⁷² S310; S352; S1819; Turner 2006, 132.

back to prehistory and persisting into the post-medieval period. The distribution of round barrows in areas of Salisbury Plain suggests that springs 'offered an interface with the spirit world and were considered sacred',¹⁷³ with a significant number of monuments clustered around the source of the Nine Mile River, for example. In the Avebury area of the Marlborough Downs, served predominantly by winterbournes, springs that feed the River Kennet, such as Swallowhead Spring between Silbury Hill and West Kennett Long Barrow, are likely to have been of great importance, feasibly influencing the positioning of these monuments. A series of wells containing late Roman votive material have also been found near Silbury Hill, inside Avebury henge and south of the settlement at West Kennett.¹⁷⁴ The significant body of medieval and post-medieval folklore and superstitions regarding the healing or restorative properties of holy wells, and their association with local fertility rites, may provide some speculative clues as to the meanings and functions of such sites in other periods.

Natural springs commonly arise at the junction of two or more geological formations. As we have already seen, the spring lines that occur along the northern escarpments of the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain, at the interface between greensand and chalk bedrock, may have played a role in influencing patterns of early medieval settlement and burial in these areas. Similarly, Alton, in the eastern Hampshire Downs *pays*, is also situated close to such an interface and resultant spring line; the place-name itself is likely to derive from OE *æwielltun*, 'spring farm'.¹⁷⁵

Springs and wells: exploring the funerary evidence

In the Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt, close to the foot of the Marlborough Downs escarpment and 350m north of the isolated burial at Callas Hill I (see above p. 81), another apparently isolated inhumation site of a similar date, known as Callas Hill II, was found in the 1970s.¹⁷⁶ The burial, thought to be sixth- or seventh-century in date, was orientated east–west and was accompanied by a spearhead, bucket mount and pottery fragments. The grave was found to have been cut into the remains of a second- to fourth-century Roman villa, which may have incorporated a temple housing a spring.

Poulton Downs, Mildenhall, in the interior of the Marlborough Downs *pays*, is the site of the only known example of an early medieval burial *within* a well. A sixth- or seventh-century female skeleton with an iron knife, two iron buckles, a bronze pin or needle and three beads, including one of amber, was discovered within a Roman well at a depth of 7m.¹⁷⁷ The site lay 500m west of the *Durocornovium–Cunetio* Roman road (Margary 43), and was investigated after ploughing unearthed a profusion of pottery, ceramic building material and stone masonry indicative of a substantial Roman settlement. The well was excavated to a depth of almost 16m,

¹⁷³ McOmish *et al.* 2002, 50.

¹⁷⁴ Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 178–80.

¹⁷⁵ Coates 1989, 22.

¹⁷⁶ Smith 1978, 136; Wiltshire and Swindon HER SU28SW300.

¹⁷⁷ Meyrick 1949.

although the excavators estimated that its total depth may have exceeded 30m. In the chalk downland landscape, access to a good water supply was 'probably the single most important factor in determining settlement location and viable forms of subsistence'.¹⁷⁸ To this end, the technology for the excavation of wells developed from the Neolithic onwards, and considerable landscape engineering took place in the Romano-British period.

Finds from within the Poulton Downs well indicate that the structure was in use throughout the Romano-British period, although rubble deposits suggest that it had ceased to be used by the time the deceased woman was placed within it. Meyrick construed that the individual had 'met a violent end', by accident or design, as the body had 'landed on a sarsen, and another rock had been thrown in on top'.¹⁷⁹ Reynolds has postulated that it may represent a sacrificial execution,¹⁸⁰ or perhaps concealment following some sort of foul play.¹⁸¹ It could be conjectured that the individual was held responsible for the cessation of the water supply, perhaps with implications of witchcraft. Late Anglo-Saxon literary evidence suggests that openings in the earth and rock were considered dangerous places at this period, representing a form of hell or a sinister underworld. Beings categorised as 'monstrous' are also frequently associated with place-name elements denoting depressions in the ground or watery places.¹⁸² While votive deposits are known from wells in the post-Roman period,¹⁸³ there is little archaeological evidence for the association of pre-Christian *funerary* events with caves, pits or shafts.¹⁸⁴ In this case, it is perhaps unnecessary to speculate too wildly on the significance of what may purely be the result of an isolated act of interpersonal violence.

In Dorset, two sites that lie at the foot of chalk escarpments or ridges, close to routeways that ascend or pass through gaps in them, are closely associated with springs. In the West Dorset Coast and Isle of Portland *pays*, Manor Farm, Portesham, located in the vicinity of a springhead, was a focus for burial from the Iron Age onwards and the location of a possible 'Romano-Celtic' temple (Figure 24). A spring is recorded in the bounds of an eleventh-century charter for Portesham as *halgan wyl*, 'holy spring',¹⁸⁵ although this is more likely to represent one of the numerous springs that run in a line to the east of the village. A significant multi-period site, including a group of post-Roman burials, was discovered in 2000 during development-led excavations.¹⁸⁶ Settlement and funerary activity from the Middle Bronze Age onwards was identified, including Iron Age storage pits and Durotrigan burials. A circular structure with stone foundations, dating to the beginning of the Roman period, may represent a temple or shrine.¹⁸⁷ The

¹⁷⁸ McOmish *et al.* 2002, 10.

¹⁷⁹ Meyrick 1949, 221.

¹⁸⁰ Reynolds 1996, 26.

¹⁸¹ Reynolds 2009, 48.

¹⁸² Hall 2007, 66.

¹⁸³ Gerrard 2011.

¹⁸⁴ Semple 2013, 71–2.

¹⁸⁵ S961, dated AD 1024.

¹⁸⁶ Valentin 2000; 2003.

¹⁸⁷ Circular 'Romano-Celtic' temples are also attested at Maiden Castle, Dorset, and Hayling Island, Hampshire.

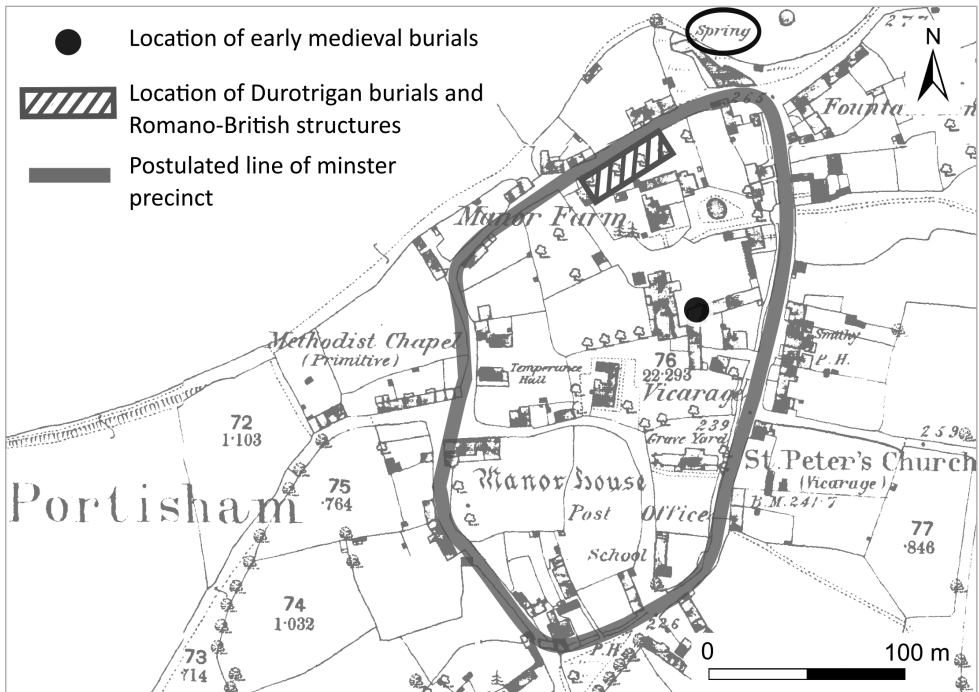


Figure 24. Iron Age and post-Roman burials, Roman structures, postulated line of ecclesiastical enclosure and natural spring at Manor Farm, Portesham, Dorset (overlaid on 1889 first edition OS map © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2018). All rights reserved).

post-Roman burials, which lay c. 50m to the south of this structure, comprised at least eight extended west–east adults and an infant. Four of the adults were in three discrete graves, while four lay within a pit, perhaps a form of ‘family vault’. One of the individual graves contained a saw, and all of the burials were associated with residual Iron Age or Roman pottery. Two of the skeletons from the pit were dated to AD 580–660 and 640–770 (at 95.4 per cent probability).¹⁸⁸ There was osteological evidence that one of the adults in the pit and one found in a separate grave were related, suggesting that the burials are all broadly contemporary.

Despite an apparent hiatus in occupation during the second and third centuries AD, Manor Farm seems to have been a longstanding site of ritual or religious activity, perhaps focused on a natural spring immediately to the north.¹⁸⁹ It is situated close to the foot of a south-facing escarpment and the interface between Kimmeridge Clay and White Chalk bedrock, adjacent to a probable drove route leading up onto the downland.

Portesham has been proposed as a possible minster site, perhaps superseded by Abbotsbury in the Late Anglo-Saxon period. Ditches containing large amounts of

¹⁸⁸ Valentin 2003, 56.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

'Saxo-Norman' pottery found at Manor Farm may relate to a minster precinct surrounding the site.¹⁹⁰ Although the early medieval burials may be associated with the minster, the radiocarbon dates suggest that they could predate the foundation of minsters in this area.¹⁹¹ The curvilinear rather than rectilinear shape of the possible enclosure does, however, intimate a more organic development, rather than a planned layout.¹⁹² This may indicate that Portesham was a 'British' monastic site, perhaps later a dependent chapel of a minster.

At Ulwell, on the Isle of Purbeck, place-name evidence and the location of a seventh-century cemetery attests to the significance of a spring in the early medieval period, if not earlier. In 1949, three unfurnished cist graves were discovered during building work at Shepherd's Farm, Ulwell, in the parish of Swanage;¹⁹³ in 1982, further graves were discovered through quarrying activity prior to building work at the farm, and excavations subsequently uncovered a cemetery containing at least fifty-seven extended inhumations in north-south rows of west-east graves.¹⁹⁴ Radiocarbon dates suggest that the cemetery was in use throughout the seventh century AD. The topography is steeply sloping, on the south-facing slope of Ballard Down, which rises from 56 to 61m aOD within a short distance of the site. The cemetery lies 70m from the boundary with the parish of Studland, which follows the line of Ulwell Stream. The site is underlain by Lower Greensand geology, although the graves were primarily cut into colluvial greensand and chalk deposits derived from eroding outcrops on Ballard Down.¹⁹⁵

The excavator divided the graves into four categories, ranging from plain earth graves (51 per cent) to cist graves with walls and occasionally lids (24.5 per cent); the remainder contained stone slabs at the head and feet, or only a rubble lining or kerb.¹⁹⁶ There was no significant disparity between the sex of individuals, and varying age groups were evenly represented. Scant information on pathologies was available owing to the poor preservation of skeletal remains.¹⁹⁷ The occurrences of superimposition or reuse of graves seem to have been intentional, suggesting that they were marked in some way. Graves that are superimposed or reopened do not all appear to be 'special', however, and there seems to be no correlation between reopened or superimposed graves and sex, age, grave type or grave-goods.

As Cox has suggested, the overall impression is of an organised cemetery, in use over several generations, perhaps representing a static local community. The lack of any obvious indicators of Christianity, the lack of grave-goods and the uniformity of the west-east graves are all traits of the sub-Roman cemeteries characterised by Cannington in Somerset.¹⁹⁸ The excavator refers to the reuse of a Roman roof tile – although it is not clear in what context this item was found – and a copper alloy Roman coin was found in the upper fill of one of the graves, but this is likely to be

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60–1.

¹⁹¹ Hall 2000, 2.

¹⁹² Valentin 2003, 72.

¹⁹³ Farrar 1949.

¹⁹⁴ Cox 1988.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37, 43.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁹⁸ Rahtz *et al.* 2000.

residual.¹⁹⁹ It is possible, however, that these materials were a conscious inclusion, as is thought to be the case at Caistor-by-Norwich in Norfolk, where flints and Roman tiles may have been deliberately placed over the inhumations to mark the graves,²⁰⁰ or at Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire, where graves in a cemetery close to a Roman road and a 'Romano-Celtic' temple incorporated Roman masonry.²⁰¹

Cox claims that the large-scale quarrying and manufacturing in Purbeck during the Romano-British period 'may have enabled the survival into the seventh century of cultural affinities closer to the vestiges of the Roman world than with the Anglo-Saxon settlement of southern England'.²⁰² A springhead lies at the foot of the chalk slope, 200m north-west of the cemetery, and Ulwell is thought to derive from OE *ule* and *wella*, 'well or spring frequented by owls'.²⁰³ The toponymic allusion to this feature suggests that it held some significance, although the first recorded reference to the place-name is thirteenth-century. Aside from its practical importance, it is plausible that the spring may have been a focus for ritual. The cemetery is also adjacent to one of only two natural passes through the Purbeck chalk ridge, another possible influencing factor in the choice of location.²⁰⁴

Watercourses

Beyond marking more literal territorial and spatial divisions in the landscape, rivers and streams are another recognised element of early medieval ritual and mortuary topography.²⁰⁵ The riverine distribution of cemeteries and settlements in the Hampshire Downs *pays* has already been discussed in the previous chapter, and elsewhere on the chalk analogous patterns occur. Although such burial sites are often found on the valley side above settlements, many are located on or near the floodplain, often in close proximity to fording places. Aside from purely practical applications, fords and river crossings are thought to have been important in the sacral topography of early medieval pre-Christian societies as liminal or transcendent places.²⁰⁶

A number of sites along the Salisbury Avon in Wiltshire present an unfolding picture of funerary engagements with this major watercourse during the fifth to seventh centuries (Figure 25). At Lake, Woodford valley, the southernmost burial site in the Salisbury Plain *pays*, a waterlogged fifth- to early sixth-century inhumation was discovered during a watching brief by Wessex Archaeology relating to the construction of an amenity lake.²⁰⁷ The remains of a woman in her early twenties, which lay beneath a grave cover of fourteen oak timbers, was radiocarbon dated to AD 450–610 (at 95 per cent probability). The site lay at 60m aOD

¹⁹⁹ Cox 1988, 45–6.

²⁰⁰ Myres and Green 1973.

²⁰¹ Rawlings 1995.

²⁰² Cox 1988, 46–7.

²⁰³ Mills 1977, 56.

²⁰⁴ Cox 1988, 37.

²⁰⁵ Lund 2010; Semple 2013, 73.

²⁰⁶ Lund 2005; 2010.

²⁰⁷ McKinley 2003.

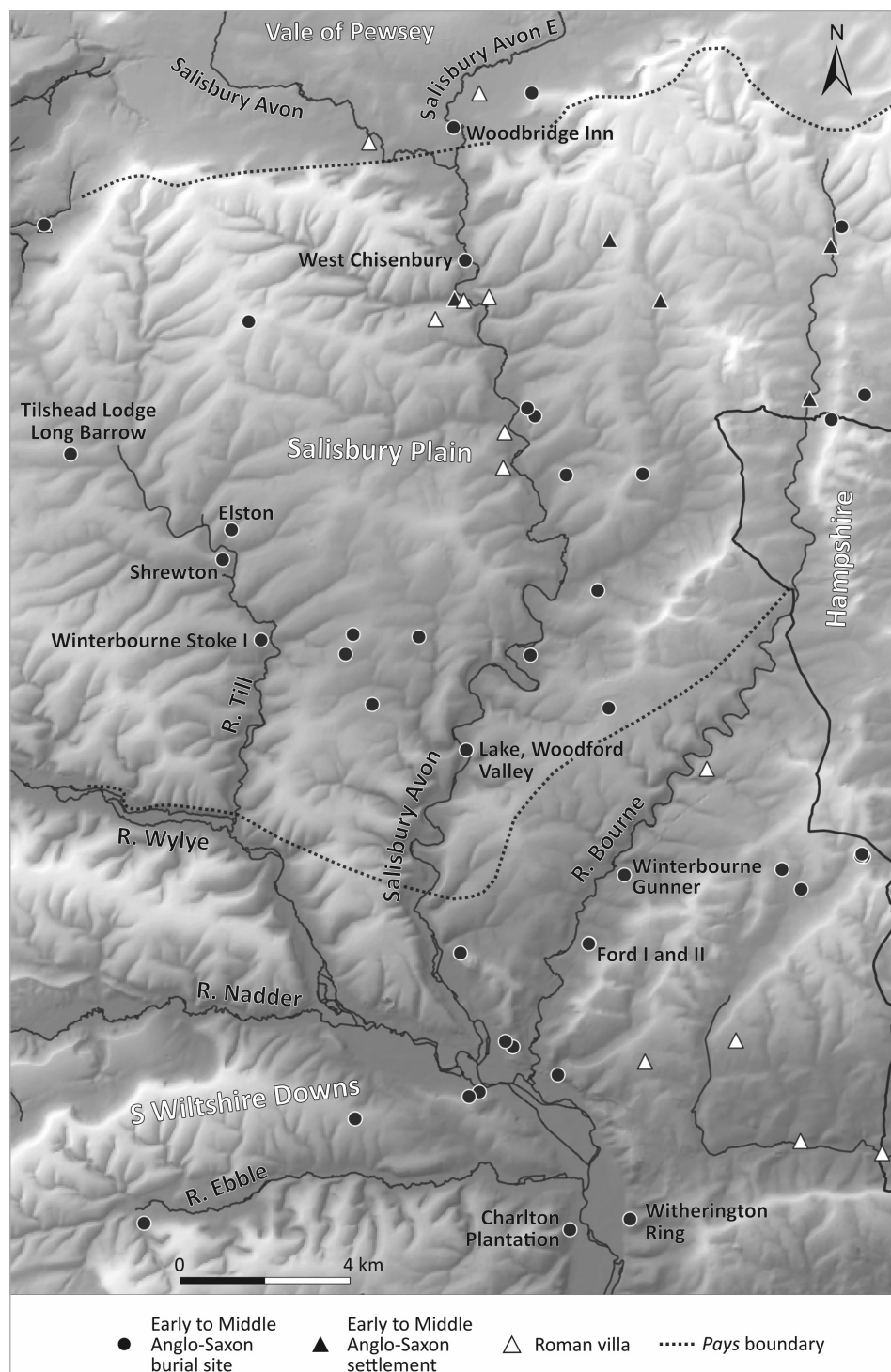


Figure 25. Salisbury Avon valley sites.

on alluvial deposits, 50m from the western banks of the Avon and 6km upstream from Old Sarum. The burial was orientated south–north, and was fully prone. The practice of pronation occurs in almost all periods and traditions, and has attracted a variety of possible interpretations, including the superstitious prevention of revenantism, perhaps due to the perception that the deceased held supernatural powers or that they were in some way dangerous, even in death.²⁰⁸ Individuals to have received this burial treatment include possible examples of ‘cunning women’ or practitioners of folk magic, although these are usually accompanied by a range of amuletic grave-goods.²⁰⁹ Alternative explanations for pronation, such as a belief in the necessity of journeying into the underworld after death, are also conceivable. Although Margaret Faull has suggested that pronation could represent an indicator of ‘British’ identity,²¹⁰ it would be unwise in this case to speculate on the cultural allegiance of the individual, in the absence of any other diagnostic evidence. Prone burial is, however, one of the traits identified as a possible marker of paganism in late Roman cemeteries,²¹¹ together with decapitation, the positioning of coins in the mouth and hobnail footwear.

As McKinley has observed, the spiritual connotations of the watery place and the liminal location of the Lake burial site are potentially significant. It is situated between two probable fording places: *Wiflesford* (Wilsford), ‘*Wifel’s ford*’, and *Diarneford* (Durnford), ‘secret or hidden ford’.²¹² Alongside the social connectivity that they facilitated, bridges or fords were central to the Anglo-Saxon cognitive landscape, as evidenced archaeologically by ritually deposited weapons close to such features.²¹³ Such places had layered meanings in Scandinavian mythology, representing an interface between the realms of the living and the dead, while watercourses in general were considered ‘a medium that brought human beings closer to gods’.²¹⁴ River cults were also an important ‘Romano-Celtic’ tradition: Gildas wrote that the Romano-British once ‘heaped divine honours’ on ‘mountains, hills and rivers’.²¹⁵ A range of Roman material found in natural bodies of water, such as rivers and bogs, is increasingly being viewed as votive in nature.²¹⁶ Evidence for Romano-British settlement in the immediate area of Lake is, however, seemingly absent. Four Bronze Age bowl barrows are located within 300m of the site, but intrusive barrow burial was not chosen in the case of this burial.

The northernmost site along the Salisbury Avon is Woodbridge Inn, North Newton, where two west–east skeletons, together with a shield boss and a spearhead, were found as a result of road widening in 1935.²¹⁷ The cropmarks of possible Bronze Age ring-ditches have been identified from aerial photographs nearby.²¹⁸

²⁰⁸ Cf. Reynolds 2009, 68–76.

²⁰⁹ Meaney 1981; Dickinson 1993; Geake 2003.

²¹⁰ Faull 1977, 9.

²¹¹ Philpott 1991; Cooke 1998, 250.

²¹² Gover *et al.* 1939, 326, 363, 372.

²¹³ Lund 2010, 55.

²¹⁴ Brink 2013, 45.

²¹⁵ *DEB* 4, 2–3.

²¹⁶ Hutton 2011, 3.

²¹⁷ Cunnington 1935.

²¹⁸ NMR SU 15 NW 7.

Just under 4km to the south, at West Chisenbury, an extended burial accompanied by an iron spearhead was found in a shallow grave in 1928, and other possible burials have been discovered nearby.²¹⁹ These two sites lie in topographic positions strikingly similar to that at Lake, Woodford Valley, 100m and 50m west of the Avon respectively. Excavations close to a probable Roman villa at Compton, just over 1km south-south-west of the West Chisenbury burial, produced organic-tempered sherds which could be Early Anglo-Saxon,²²⁰ and documentary evidence suggests that this was a populated and traversed landscape in the early medieval period. The modern A345 road, which runs parallel with the Avon and passes close to this settlement site and the West Chisenbury burial site, may have early origins as a thoroughfare linking the Pewsey Vale and the lower Salisbury Avon valley, in between the two chalk masses on either side of the river.²²¹ The early tenth-century bounds of Enford refer to a '*stræt*', suggested by Grundy to have been located on the southern boundary of the parish.²²² The presence of the hamlet Longstreet – *Langestret* in 1242 – on the east bank of the Avon opposite Enford village,²²³ and Longstreet Down at the eastern end of the same tithing, supports the notion that a made-up road ran between the river and the eastern boundary of the estate. Alternatively, the place-name may refer to a road running parallel with the river, close to the hamlet of Longstreet. *Herepaðas* are also mentioned twice in the bounds. One of these probably ran along the northern boundary of East Chisenbury, northeast of Chisenbury Camp,²²⁴ while a second, known as *ceaster herepað*, may have run along the eastern boundary of Enford, perhaps meeting the *Sorviodunum–Cunetio* Roman road east of Coombe Down. The morphology of the parishes suggests that this latter *herepað* also defined the eastern boundaries of Upavon, Manningford and Pewsey.

To the south of Salisbury, approximately 15km downstream from the female burial at Lake, two further burial sites sit on opposite sides of the Avon, c. 5km north of the Hampshire border. At Charlton Plantation, Downton, a few hundred metres west of the river at 50m aOD, an inhumation cemetery spanning the fifth to seventh centuries was excavated in 1981.²²⁵ The cemetery contained forty-two graves, with a range of grave-goods including shield bosses, swords and brooches. Although the site is not directly associated with any earlier monuments, a low mound just outside the cemetery has been identified as a possible barrow. To the east of the river, in the parish of Alderbury, a single north–south-aligned burial was located in 1874 at an altitude of 70m aOD within the bank of a lynchet, which forms part of a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age enclosure known as Witherington Ring.²²⁶ The burial was accompanied by a long double-edged sword with a decorated pommel, a shield boss, a knife, a ferrule and a strike-a-light, and is considered to be broadly contemporary with those found at Charlton Plantation. This pair of burial sites is located approximately midway between the minster sites of

²¹⁹ Cunnington 1930, 84; Meaney 1964, 267.

²²⁰ McOmish *et al.* 2002, 109.

²²¹ Crittall 1959.

²²² S427; Grundy 1919, 232.

²²³ Gover *et al.* 1939, 329.

²²⁴ Grundy 1919, 229.

²²⁵ Davies 1984.

²²⁶ Cunnington 1933, 170.

Aldbury and Downton. The Witherington Ring burial lay just north of the parish and hundred boundary, and a barrow containing human remains but no associated items was also said to have been located c. 18m from the site.²²⁷ Numerous early medieval metal-detected finds from the immediate area, including several Early Anglo-Saxon brooches recovered from c. 500–900m to the east-south-east, at the base of the slope, are recorded in the Portable Antiquities Scheme database,²²⁸ perhaps suggesting the presence of a cemetery.

The Charlton Plantation and Witherington Ring sites lie just over a kilometre downstream from the point at which the Ebbble converges into the Avon, creating a single broad river. There are numerous fording places along this section of the Avon, particularly to the south of the county boundary, as attested by the place-names Fordingbridge and Charford (*Forde* and *Cerdeford* respectively in Domesday Book). West–east movement across the landscape was thus facilitated, and such fords may not have hindered navigation on the river itself, as vessels are likely to have been of shallow draught.²²⁹ Charford may be the location of an early sixth-century battle at *Cerdicesford in fluvio Avene*, ‘*Cerdic’s* ford on the River Avon’.²³⁰ Although many places associated with the figure Cerdic are unidentifiable and almost certainly fictional, Charford is a convincing candidate for identification with the place mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.²³¹ Now preserved only in the names of two farms and a manor house, the ford is likely to have been a few hundred metres south of the Wiltshire border, which by the Late Anglo-Saxon period probably represented a frontier between the *Wilsæte* and the people of *Hamtunscir*.²³²

The only burial site dating from the period of study discovered in the Northern Clay Vale *pays* in the far north of Wiltshire – and another example of a fifth- to sixth-century inhumation situated in close proximity to a major river (the Upper Thames) – is Castle Eaton, Wiltshire. The burial, which was accompanied by three pierced Roman coins and several glass beads, was found in the 1970s less than 100m to the south of the Upper Thames, which also marks the Wiltshire–Gloucestershire boundary.²³³ Although the formal creation of the county boundary postdates the burial, the Upper Thames itself forms an obvious natural landmark and dividing line, and was also a key Early Anglo-Saxon corridor of communication.²³⁴ In the context of our study area, this site represents something of an outlier in terms of apparently culturally ‘Anglo-Saxon’ burials during this period, being the only known example in the Northern Clay Vale and indeed one of very few in the ‘cheese’ landscape of northern and western Wiltshire (see Chapter 3, pp. 130–2). The site lies on alluvial deposits and Oxford Clay bedrock at an altitude of 74m aOD. A fording place in the river was located just to the north of the burial site, and the area between Castle Eaton and Kempsford was a key strategic point. This was the scene of the battle of Kempsford at the beginning of the ninth century, at

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

²²⁸ For example, WILT-A39544; WILT-AC2BD1; WILT-AFEFB2; WILT-803395.

²²⁹ Eagles and Ager 2004, 93.

²³⁰ ASC 519; Coates 1989, 51.

²³¹ Yorke 1989b, 91.

²³² *Ibid.*, 85–6; Eagles 2001, 205.

²³³ Friend 1980; Eagles 2001, 219; Draper 2006, 146.

²³⁴ Dickinson 1976; Yorke 1995, 298.

which West Saxon hegemony over northern Wiltshire is said to have been conclusively determined.²³⁵ The fortified manor of Kempsford later defended the passage across the river.²³⁶ The Castle Eaton burial should be considered in the broader context of the growing power of the Gewissan kingdom between the late fifth and early seventh centuries, which is reflected in an increasing number of burials in the Upper Thames valley with prestige weapons such as swords.²³⁷ It could be conjectured that the burial had a sentinel function, guarding the fording place, although the absence of weapons and the low-lying, unassuming topographic position would be fairly atypical.²³⁸

In addition to major rivers, smaller streams or seasonal winterbournes may have attracted cultic activity and veneration, which may be linked to a desire to control or legitimise access to water itself or to the social resources it enabled.²³⁹ On the downland, although erosion during interglacial periods imprinted deep coombes and long ridges into the chalk, very few permanent watercourses remain owing to the porous nature of the bedrock. Seasonal streams known as winterbournes or lavants run intermittently in the winter months. These ephemeral watercourses also feature in early medieval charter bounds as *floda* or *flodan*, and, in Hampshire, this element is thought to signify a stream that runs only following heavy rain;²⁴⁰ the term appears in several charters, such as those of Droxford²⁴¹ and West Tisted.²⁴²

On Salisbury Plain, a number of funerary sites of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date are located in close proximity to the River Till, a seasonal watercourse that was long known as the Winterbourne (see Figure 25). Many of the estates in the hundred of Dolesfield, or the southern Till valley catchment area, are referred to as *Wintreburne* in Domesday Book.²⁴³ It has been conjectured that, like other chalkland valleys in Wiltshire, such as the Og and Upper Kennet, the Till formed a discrete fifth- or sixth-century *regio*, which was then absorbed into a larger sub-kingdom as Wessex expanded in the seventh century.²⁴⁴ About midway between the source of the Till and its convergence with the Wylfe – and around the point by which the flow of the stream begins to become more reliable throughout the year – is the village of Winterbourne Stoke. Recorded as *Wintreburnestoch* in Domesday Book, Pitt has suggested that this suffix refers to a ‘holy place’,²⁴⁵ although it may simply denote a farmstead or secondary settlement. A disc barrow denominated Winterbourne Stoke I, within the Winterbourne Stoke West barrow cemetery, overlooking the valley to its east, was excavated by Cunington and Hoare in 1809, revealing a primary cremation and an intrusive inhumation accompanied by a probable early

²³⁵ ASC 802.

²³⁶ NMR SU 19 NE 7.

²³⁷ Dickinson 1976, 428, 448–9.

²³⁸ O’Brien 1999.

²³⁹ Cf. Bevan 1999.

²⁴⁰ Jepson 2011, 53.

²⁴¹ S446; S276.

²⁴² S488; S511.

²⁴³ Thorn and Thorn 1979.

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Pitt 1999, 71; Draper 2006, 57, 69.

²⁴⁵ Pitt 1999, 71. The possible religious connotations of the OE element *stoc* have been discussed by Smith (1956, 153–6).

medieval knife.²⁴⁶ This single utilitarian item suggests a seventh-century date, but whether the burial can be considered culturally 'Anglo-Saxon' on the basis of this item is questionable.

A few kilometres upstream lies Shrewton, another of the *Wintreburne* manors, within the ecclesiastical parish of Maddington. Here, just to the south of the parish and hundred boundary, on a spur 300m west of the Till, an extended skeleton, accompanied by a knife, drinking cup and bronze girdle ornaments, was found when a windmill was erected at the beginning of the nineteenth century.²⁴⁷ In 1968, a further inhumation of a 45- to 50-year-old woman, with an early seventh-century gold bracteate, was uncovered during rescue excavations.²⁴⁸ At Elston, another estate recorded as *Wintreburne* in Domesday Book, two skeletons and an early medieval knife were discovered in 1856.²⁴⁹ This site lies just under a kilometre north of the Shrewton burials, on the opposite side of the valley and at a similar altitude. A *herestret* is mentioned in the undated bounds of Addestone, the southern part of Maddington.²⁵⁰ This almost certainly corresponds with the modern B3083 road, which runs the length of the Till valley, roughly following the course of the river. It forms part of the eastern boundary of Maddington, 400m east of the Shrewton burials, and passes 450m to the west of Winterbourne Stoke I further south.

Five kilometres north-west of Elston and Shrewton, Tilshead Lodge long barrow is located on the slope of a spur that rises to the west of the source of the Till. Although the watercourse rises at Tilshead, its current name is thought to be a late back-formation from this village name, itself *Theodulveside* in 1086, meaning '*Theod(w)ulf's* hide of land', rather than a reference to the source of the stream.²⁵¹ This long barrow was excavated by Hoare, who revealed a superficial west-east inhumation at the eastern end, and later by Thurnam, who located another shallow west-east burial towards the centre of the mound, with grave-goods including a shield boss and mountings and a copper alloy-bound wooden bucket.²⁵² These grave-goods suggest a late sixth- to seventh-century date, and it is possible that the two inhumations are contemporary with each other.

A similar pattern occurs in the Lower Bourne valley, north-east of Salisbury, which incorporates Winterbourne Gunner cemetery – one of the earliest 'Anglo-Saxon' funerary sites in the study area, focused on an earlier mound – and the seventh-century primary male barrow burial at Ford II, Laverstock. These sites are both located at a similar distance from the watercourse as those in the Till valley. Winterbourne Gunner is the northernmost of three strip parishes bearing the first element. The mid-tenth-century bounds of *Winterburnan*, probably Laverstock, refer to a watercourse named *læfer*, undoubtedly the Bourne.²⁵³ Laver is a well-evidenced British river-name,²⁵⁴ and lavant is another term for a winterbourne.

²⁴⁶ Hoare 1812, 113.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁴⁸ Smith 1969, 128.

²⁴⁹ Cunningham 1933, 168; Robinson 1987.

²⁵⁰ S1589.

²⁵¹ Gover *et al.* 1939, 10, 236.

²⁵² Hoare 1821b, 91–2; Thurnam 1869, 196.

²⁵³ S543.

²⁵⁴ L543.1.00.

The second element of the place-name signifies either that this was a dependent settlement of an estate centred on the Laver/Bourne valley or, as for Winterbourne Stoke, that it was the 'holy place' of the valley.

Conclusion

Any exploration of the pre- or proto-Christian landscape is unavoidably speculative, reliant as it is on fragmentary and equivocal material evidence. It is unfeasible to clearly decipher belief systems connected with the natural world from mortuary practices alone. Caveats aside, there is much to be gained from the detailed scrutiny of the landscape surrounding individual funerary sites using a micro-topographical approach in revealing and providing context to patterns of ritual. This chapter has considered the ways in which a range of topographic elements, such as hilltops, ridge-tops, escarpments, springs, wells and watercourses, guided the placement of the dead in relation to the natural and inhabited environment.

Just as the previous chapter provided an insight into the extent of sub-regional variation in the reuse of monuments, this review serves to reiterate that few universal principles can be applied to the positioning of early medieval funerary sites. The case studies employed to illustrate each category are inevitably selective – illuminating the remarkable, rather than the commonplace – and undoubtedly raise more questions than they answer. Still, through the themes explored in this chapter, some striking trends have been brought to light. Community cemeteries, including those incorporating barrows, were located primarily on the lower slopes of valleys, often close to corridors of movement. This suggests that such foci of funerary activity were intimately connected with routine travel through the landscape and were thus highly visible. Smaller groups of burials, meanwhile, may not have been perceptible to the passerby unless marked in some way, but occupied a variety of topographical positions and were often associated with manifestly conspicuous natural features. This reflects the deeply local nature of the choices made by individual families or kin groups. The placement of a series of such sites along the prominent northern escarpments of the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain during the sixth and seventh centuries suggests the repetition and intentional reproduction of a locally meaningful tradition. The significance of this patterning might speculatively relate to the presence of a territorial boundary or frontier close to this line, or perhaps to a belief in the sentinel role of the dead vis-à-vis the living in the valley below. The founding of burial sites, chiefly from the seventh century, on hilltops and ridge-tops is likely to have been stimulated by aggregates of natural and human-altered elements, ranging from complex networks of existing barrows and linear earthworks to the physical boundaries formed by watersheds and the territorial boundaries these attract. An invigoration of interest in the past, linked especially with hillforts, can again be seen in the west of the study area. Activity connected with springs and wells, too, betrays long-standing Romano-British or early Christian antecedents and associations. These apparently 'British' traditions, and the extent to which these might be identifiable in different areas of Wessex, are explored in the next chapter.

In some cases it might seem like imaginative over-interpretation to contend that 'ritual' was involved when more functional explanations would fit. The frequent

apparent accenting of watercourses with funerary sites, especially close to fords, is one such case in point. Rivers, fording places and their hinterlands were, of course, regularly traversed zones and important nodes in communication routes. But their purely practical functions do not preclude more complex layers of meaning, and indeed are likely to have rendered them particularly effective as places in which ritual could be transmitted through mortuary acts and performances. Take, for example, the Salisbury Avon valley, where common, shared (though far from homogeneous) traditions became rapidly established in the Early Anglo-Saxon period. Facilitated by the natural topographic and social zone formed by the river valley, this was achieved through rites and practices that embodied a symbolic entanglement of material culture, place and landscape. Social messages were reproduced through both individual and collective expressions of grief and remembrance. It is possible to conceive that these also spoke of the continuing agency of the dead as perceived by the living, and that the positioning of burials was founded on belief systems connected to natural places and spiritually coded topographic features, which fostered the maintenance of 'harmonious relationships with a complex pantheon of invisible beings and forces'.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Tilley 2010, 182.

‘Britons and Saxons’?

Prominent and symbolically charged topographic and human-altered features acted as nodal points in the cognitive landscape of early medieval Wessex. Central places of long-standing significance were used and reused, recurrently ascribed new layers of meaning through collective acts of funerary memorialisation and ritual performance. The activity evidenced in these locations suggests a deep familiarity with the vocabulary of the landscape and an enduring awareness of the potency of particular features. In some cases, though, seemingly timeless ‘ancestral’ ties to the landscape are likely have been overstated, or indeed invented, whether by ascendant elites as part of strategies to strengthen authority or incoming groups seeking to assert claims to territory. What we refer to as Early Anglo-Saxon culture, most obviously manifested in the archaeological record in distinctive burial rites typified by the deposition of ‘Germanic’ grave-goods, was long perceived as having been transplanted wholesale from the continent: an invasive identity in opposition to indigenous customs and traditions. In that context, the prehistoric and Roman features appropriated by ‘Anglo-Saxon’ communities were seen as having been indirectly inherited from the native population that they replaced, in a landscape that was already populated and deeply inscribed.¹ Yet it is no longer considered realistic that significant population displacement occurred, or even that the majority of the inhabitants of lowland Britain by the end of the fifth century were continental immigrants. Nevertheless, this was a period in which important processes of identity formation and social change were transpiring, with competition between groups manifested in the fission and fusion of polities at a local, regional and ultimately national scale. Comparable developments were taking place throughout western Europe in the centuries following the retreat of the Roman Empire. The insecurities and resultant affirmations of group identity as well as the patterns of mutual interaction that these transformations precipitated can, arguably, be recognised in the burial record.

The previous two chapters have revealed the extent of variation, as well as many commonalities and broad trends, within the mortuary practices of early medieval Wessex. The present chapter explores the evidence further, and asks how some of these variations at a trans-regional and sub-regional level might be explained. Did communities in different areas of Wessex have clearly defined cultural allegiances that they expressed and signalled through burial, and, if so, how did various groups interact with each other? Caution must be exercised when using burial practices – and the material culture, or lack thereof, associated with them – as a proxy for

¹ Howe 2002, 92–3.

ethnic affiliation. We must similarly be mindful of the potential of taphonomic and historiographical factors to influence the survival and distribution of graves and their contents.

Anglo-Saxon archaeology: the development of a discipline

An awareness of the historiography of the Migration Period and the evolution of narratives surrounding concepts of ethnic and social cohesion in post-Roman Britain is crucial in interpreting the burial record of this period, not least because a significant proportion of the funerary evidence we have derives from antiquarian excavations. Understanding the nature and circumstances of these early, often unwitting, forays into Anglo-Saxon archaeology, and the more formal emergence of the discipline in the intervening centuries, is key to a critical appreciation of the ways in which the individual sites and broader social processes of the early medieval period have been interpreted.

Cremation burials later recognised as Anglo-Saxon were first illustrated and recorded by Sir Thomas Browne, when he unearthed a group of fifty pottery urns from shallow soil near Walsingham, Norfolk, in 1657. Browne was unsure of the antiquity of the urns, but believed them to be Roman, publishing them the following year as *Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall, or a Discourse of the Sepulchrell Urnes lately found in Norfolk*.² The discipline of Anglo-Saxon archaeology was yet to take shape, and in some ways Browne's work represents the last time for centuries that early medieval artefacts, mortuary practice and attitudes to mortality could be interpreted without the intention of substantiating rigid historical frameworks or preconceived ideas of invasion and settlement.³

For much of the Middle Ages, the widely accepted British origin narrative had been the Brutus myth, derived from the c. ninth-century text *Historia Brittonum* and propagated through the twelfth-century works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, which traced the ancestral lineage of the island's inhabitants back to the Trojans.⁴ The desire for exotic ancestors, with tales of chivalry and knighthood, was influenced by the presence of a Norman French ruling class. Amidst increasing scepticism, though, the validity of the Brutus model gradually declined from the sixteenth century onwards and a new origin story, more easily supported by historical documents, began to be advanced. Anglo-Saxonism initially evolved from its role in political and ecclesiastical debates of the sixteenth century when, following the Reformation, non-Classical origin stories were called upon to legitimise the authority of the Church of England. Antiquarian interest in Anglo-Saxon studies was indeed partly stimulated by the need to establish a historical model and lineage for this newly formed Church.⁵ Although the English public were not initially sympathetic to the 'Anglo-Saxons', whom they perceived as barbaric, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards interest in the derivations of the cultural iden-

² Browne 1658.

³ Williams 2002, 47.

⁴ MacDougall 1982.

⁵ Sweet 2004, 192.

tities of the British Isles – often with a strong Anglocentric focus – was awoken.⁶ Intra-European conflict coupled with internal power struggles kindled the inexorable rise of nationalism, as Britain strove to set itself apart from the European ‘other’.⁷ Anglo-Saxon antiquities were of considerable importance for the construction of a sense of nationhood in eighteenth-century England; indeed, they became ‘crucial to all that defined the English nation’.⁸ Principles of freedom, common law, and the political system were all regarded as achievements of England’s Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

The systematic investigation of visible monuments in the rural landscape, such as barrows, had by the early eighteenth century become a popular pursuit among self-styled antiquarians. Between 1719 and 1743, William Stukeley conducted extensive fieldwork on the chalk downlands of Wessex, particularly among the prehistoric barrows of Salisbury Plain. Although Stukeley took care to note ‘how the body was posited’, he often failed to reveal *where* it was ‘posited’, not fully appreciating the distinctions between primary and secondary or intrusive interments.⁹ Whether due to ignorance or uninterest, a disregard for later intrusive burials was near universal among the barrow diggers of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ In Kent, although Early Anglo-Saxon barrows attracted particular attention for their rich grave-goods, early medieval remains were not correctly identified until the Revd James Douglas published the results of his Kentish excavations as *Nenia Britannica* in 1793. While the Revd Bryan Faussett had been one of the first to excavate early medieval burials (in 1757–77), he failed to recognise them as such, attributing them to ‘Romans Britonized’ or ‘Britons Romanized’. The results of his excavations were published posthumously as *Inventorium Sepulchrale* by Charles Roach Smith.¹¹ Numerous important discoveries were made during the nineteenth century as a result of urban expansion, the construction of railways and quarrying.¹² Antiquarian barrow digging also continued with fervour. William Cunnington and Sir Richard Colt Hoare – together with their labourers, the Parker brothers of Heytesbury, Wiltshire – were at their most prolific in Wessex at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Secondary Saxon interments in earlier mounds began to be recognised, and were largely interpreted as the result of practical expediency following a battle or skirmish.¹³ Indeed, primary barrows were often construed in this way, too, as the following passage from an educational book issued by the Religious Tract Society recounts:

The contest between the Britons and Saxons, so far as [Wessex] was concerned, was not finally decided till about the year 556, when Cenric, the son of Cerdic, fought two desperate battles to the north of Salisbury. In the country between

⁶ This nationalistic harnessing of cultural heritage was not a uniquely British phenomenon: see, for example, work by Bonnie Effros (2003a; 2003b) on France.

⁷ Hobsbawm 1990.

⁸ Sweet 2004, 190.

⁹ Marsden 2011, 11.

¹⁰ Semple 2013, 4.

¹¹ Faussett 1856.

¹² Lucy 1998, 11.

¹³ For example, Slight 1816.

that city and Marlborough, are many traces of this deadly strife in the barrows or tumuli raised over the slain. It is said, that four years passed ere the Saxon chief could win this disputed ground. The annexed view, from near Chedbury Hill [Ludgershall, Wiltshire], evidently bears testimony to the extent of the slaughter in this spot. The small risings in the distance, as well as that in the foreground, are barrows: many of them have been opened, and numerous relics have been found.¹⁴

Since the emergence of Anglo-Saxonism as a field of enquiry, a few simple but pervasive narratives, derived from the scant written sources available for the fifth and sixth centuries, have persistently influenced our understanding of the historical events of this period. Accounts of the *adventus* – the traditional tale of the arrival on British shores of invaders and settlers from the ‘three most formidable races of Germany’, and the subsequent displacement of the ‘Romano-Celtic’ Britons – set out in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* and in the annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, are now considered to have limited factual basis. Rather, they are deemed to be highly stylised origin myths, deriving predominantly from an oral storytelling tradition.¹⁵ The written accounts were composed after the advent of Augustinian Christianity, yet they describe events that occurred prior to the conversion, and it is doubtful that the same concepts of history could have been preserved intact.¹⁶ The historical accuracy of the annals is further undermined by comparison with the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List, as the reigns of sixth-century kings appear to have been artificially lengthened in the *Chronicle* in order to glorify the early history of the kingdom.¹⁷ The *Chronicle* may indeed tell us more about Wessex in the ninth century, and how the West Saxons wished to perceive the origins of their kingdom, than it can about the actual events of Early Anglo-Saxon England. Even the near contemporary sixth-century writings of the British cleric, Gildas – from which the later accounts of the ‘migrations’ are partly drawn – have an underlying agenda and subtext, being originally intended as a sermon denouncing the degeneracies of the contemporary clergy and laity.

Despite the unreliability of the textual evidence, from the earliest incarnations of Anglo-Saxon scholarship these sources have routinely been called upon to validate prevailing narratives. For John Nowell Linton Myres, it would have been unfathomable for any discussion of the continental background to the ‘English settlements’ to start from any other point than Bede’s, while Gildas was also seen as a ‘credible and most valuable witness to a broad sequence of events in Britain’ in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.¹⁸ The migrationist model has tended to dictate approaches to the archaeological record: although perspectives fluctuated to some degree, the general consensus up until the latter half of the twentieth century was that substantial population movement had occurred, and that these migrations could be traced by analysing the distribution and stylistic changes of artefacts. Variations in artefact types found in different areas of England were

¹⁴ Religious Tract Society 1839, 52–3.

¹⁵ Sims-Williams 1983.

¹⁶ Yorke 1993, 45–50.

¹⁷ Dumville 1985; 1986; Yorke 1995, 34.

¹⁸ Myres 1936.

attributed to the supplanting of particular cultural groups, in accordance with historical accounts of the *adventus*. Spearheading the so-called 'comparative technique', John Mitchell Kemble had in the mid-nineteenth century drawn attention to the similarities and parallels between material found in particular regions of England and on the continent. Kemble was by no means naïve to the shortcomings of the historical sources, regarding them as a 'confused mass of traditions borrowed from the most heterogeneous sources, compacted rudely and with little ingenuity' and with 'the smallest possible amount of historical truth involved in a great deal of fable'.¹⁹ Still, there seems to have been no doubt in Kemble's mind that large-scale migrations took place, and that 'Germans coming over the Black Sea pushed Kelts northward, westward and southward'.²⁰

The pioneering Anglo-Saxon archaeologist Edward Thurlow Leeds also professed to doubt the veracity of the documentary evidence, declaring it to be 'mutually contradictory' and 'by no means impartial'.²¹ Yet Leeds still relied steadfastly on the model provided by Bede, discussing chapter by chapter the artefactual evidence for the presence of Angles, Saxons and Jutes. He argued that the progress of the 'Teutonic invaders' could be traced along river courses, and that variations in the distribution of artefacts between different regions of England could be attributed to the 'different racial elements of which Teutons were composed'.²² The view that individuals buried in the same context as Germanic-style artefacts were naturally themselves immigrants only served to perpetuate racial, ethnocentric interpretations of the archaeological evidence.

The closing decades of the twentieth century saw something of a crisis of identity in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, and the culmination of a debate between two camps: those who continued to argue that the *adventus* involved mass folk migration, and those who favoured a smaller-scale influx of Germanic aristocratic and warrior elites who politically and culturally dominated the British population, becoming the new estate-holders of eastern and southern lowland England.²³ With processualism came the desire to disregard subjective historical sources, reappraise the evidence and adopt a more objective, quantitative approach. This mood was captured pithily by Julian Richards who, caricaturing Myres' model of tracing migration through the distribution of artefacts, asked whether these anthropomorphised 'marching pots wore jackboots'.²⁴ The 'elite dominance' model – the idea that only a small number of warriors and aristocrats arrived on English shores, with origin myths of large-scale migrations being created much later – was endorsed to varying degrees in the 1980s and 1990s.²⁵ Higham argued that there was a process of acculturation and mutual influence rather than mass immigration, in which 'upwardly mobile' Britons were buried in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries with Germanic rites and costumes in order to better their social status. The Old English language was adopted for

¹⁹ Kemble 1849, 3.

²⁰ Wiley 1979, 237.

²¹ Leeds 1913, 10.

²² *Ibid.*, 25.

²³ For example, Esmonde Cleary 1989; Higham 1993; cf. Hamerow 1997.

²⁴ Richards 1988, 145.

²⁵ Arnold 1984; 1988; Hodges 1989; Higham 1993.

same reason. One problem with this argument is that such cemeteries were not necessarily 'elite', and we cannot assume that weapons and dress accessories were the preserve of the rich. Furthermore, there is little evidence for sharp social stratification in these cemeteries, but rather a form of quasi-egalitarianism. In any case, it would be difficult to identify the burial of a Briton who had consciously adopted an Anglo-Saxon identity, especially as it would probably be their intention to 'blend in'.²⁶

The 'anti-migrationist' backlash continued into the 1990s, although migration regained a certain relevance as a social process as a result of post-processualism. Somewhat polemically for the time, Heinrich Härke upheld the idea of a substantial wave of migration to post-Roman Britain, on the scale of 100,000 to 200,000 people, rather than tens of thousands, while conceding that the native population, too, remained substantial.²⁷ The field of place-name studies has in the past included some of the most persistent advocates of population replacement, in part due to the predominance of English names in lowland Britain, argued by Stenton to be the result of 'English colonisation on a scale which can have left little room for British survival'.²⁸ The fact remains, however, that the late Roman population was so considerable – an estimated 3.6 million – that extensive ethnic cleansing is unlikely to have been feasible.²⁹

Over the past two decades increasingly refined genetic methods and data have been used in attempts to estimate the extent and legacy of post-Roman migration to Britain. A study published in the early 2000s found that samples of modern male DNA from central England and Friesland were 'statistically indistinguishable', in striking contrast to samples from North Wales, which differed markedly from both.³⁰ While the authors concluded that this is most plausibly the result of a 'massive migration of Anglo-Saxon men' to the English Midlands,³¹ in reality it is equally possible that these migratory events occurred over a much longer timescale. A more recent study, which compared the whole-genome sequences of seven early medieval and three Iron Age individuals from three cemeteries in Cambridgeshire with modern samples, attempted to address some of the issues with earlier genetic studies.³² Fine-grained techniques allowed the authors to estimate with remarkable confidence that on average at least a quarter of the ancestry of modern Britons derives from 'Anglo-Saxon immigrants', with a particularly high proportion in eastern England 'closer to the immigrant source'.³³ The genomes of two sequenced early medieval individuals suggested recent immigration from a 'source population close to modern Dutch'; one was 'genetically similar to native Iron Age samples' and another was 'admixed'.³⁴ Still, the problems inherent in using present-day DNA data to estimate historical migrations are manifest, not

²⁶ Higham 1993, 180.

²⁷ Härke 1990; 1992.

²⁸ Stenton 1943; cf. Chadwick 1907; Gelling 1993.

²⁹ Millett 1990; Rippon *et al.* 2015, 8.

³⁰ Weale *et al.* 2002.

³¹ Thomas *et al.* 2006, 2651.

³² Schiffels *et al.* 2016, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

least because profiling the ‘indigenous’ population involves assumptions about the mobility of prehistoric populations.

Stable and radiogenic isotopes are also increasingly used to identify mobility, although these techniques are still far from routine and often tend to be tested in areas where a high proportion of non-locally born individuals is already hypothesised.³⁵ While no such analyses have as yet been conducted on burials from the area and period of study, oxygen and strontium isotopic ratios from nineteen fifth-century burials found at Berinsfield (Oxfordshire), in the Gewissan heartland of the Upper Thames valley, have recently been examined.³⁶ The results indicated that the majority of the individuals sampled were locally born and only one – an adult male with a fragment of Roman belt fitting – was identified as being of probable continental European origin.

The extent of continental immigration, whatever its scale, was undoubtedly regionally variable. It could be argued that our fixation with identifying and quantifying Early Anglo-Saxon migration as a singular phenomenon – in a sense perpetually seeking to confirm the same preconceived ideas precipitated by the historical narratives – is unhelpful and futile, especially if we do not put it into perspective by considering the *longue durée* of migration within north-west Europe.³⁷ The relative impact of migration on the emergence of group identities during this period is even more difficult to evaluate, not least by scientific means alone. It is perhaps unrealistic to seek a definitive answer to the post-Roman migration question. Ultimately, neither science-based approaches nor the study of material culture or historical sources in isolation can reveal the intricacies of the social processes that took place during the Migration Period, and mutual dialogue is more crucial than ever.³⁸

Burial, identity and ethnogenesis

Notions of ethnicity and group identity are deeply imbedded in perceptions and evocations of early medieval Europe, perhaps more so than for any other historical milieu. As we have seen, the nationalist movements of many northern and central European countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries drew upon grand historical narratives of the *Völkerwanderung*: the voyages, military conquests and primordial character of barbarian tribes.³⁹ Archaeological evidence has long been used to illustrate the chronicled origins and migrations of these ‘peoples’ for the simple reason that, at least superficially, the distributions of distinct styles of material culture can often be seen to correlate neatly with these accounts. Popular enthusiasm for these undeniably engaging narratives as a source of national identity to a certain extent continues to drive research agendas and to inform educational resources and museum displays.⁴⁰ Yet such concepts of nationhood, ethnicity or,

³⁵ E.g. Groves *et al.* 2013.

³⁶ Hughes *et al.* 2014.

³⁷ Chapman and Hamerow 1997, 1; cf. Oosthuizen 2017, xii–xiii.

³⁸ Martin 2015, 173.

³⁹ Geary 2002; Reynolds, S. 1998.

⁴⁰ Hakenbeck 2011, 7; Hills 2003, 38–9.

indeed, coherent group identities of any sort can be anachronistic when applied to the post-Roman period. Besides, given our retreat from the culture history paradigm, it is no longer justifiable to conceive of pre-existing bounded groups passively reflected in the archaeological record by brooches and pots. It is increasingly recognised that identity – ethnic or otherwise – does not in itself dictate the emergence of particular material culture sets, but rather it is a two-way process: the life-ways, display and complex performative interactions with objects play an integral role in processes of identity formation.⁴¹ Material culture is, in a sense, seen as possessing the agency to affect and direct social structures and behaviour rather than the other way around.

Social or cultural identity can be defined by a range of attributes, of which ethnicity is one facet. Ethnicity itself is not innate, biological or corporeal but a cultural construct, which can be shaped by such factors as (perceived) common descent, language, religious beliefs or geographical area. The changing approaches to ethnicity and identity in archaeology and history over the last century, and their bearing on the early Middle Ages, have been discussed elsewhere and need not be repeated at length here.⁴² Suffice to say that there has been a shift towards the thinking that early medieval ethnicity was characterised by a degree of flexibility and fluidity,⁴³ and that multiple identities – including perhaps ethnic identities – could well have been held by an individual at any one time.⁴⁴ This stems from the idea, first developed in anthropology and ethnography, that ethnicity is a situational construct, in the sense that it can be employed as and when a situation or circumstances require it. It is all to do with *belief* of belonging to a particular group, and can therefore be seen as cognitive – a state of mind.⁴⁵ But this is not to say that it was possible to switch between different ethnic and cultural identities at will.⁴⁶

The theory of ethnogenesis, as developed by the ‘Vienna School’, envisages a core elite group or *Traditionskern* (‘nucleus of tradition’) as a driver and living embodiment of ethnic identity, which could be adopted by followers regardless of their own genetic descent.⁴⁷ As we have already seen, the spurious genealogies and origin myths of Wessex and other kingdoms, imparted in the middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period, were shaped by aspirations to legitimise royal power and ultimately England as a unified entity.⁴⁸ The creation of foundation narratives such as these is recognised in the ethnogenesis model as a key process in the construction, propagation and manipulation – often by political or military leaders – of ethnic identities.⁴⁹ Hence, not only are these narratives historically and chronologically unreliable, we cannot actually be sure that the groups they describe existed in any coherent form. What they can do, however, is offer us a snapshot of how particular

⁴¹ Hodder 1982; Jones 1997; Martin 2015, 163–4.

⁴² See, for example, Hakenbeck 2007; 2011, 21–4; Halsall 2007, 35–45; Härke 2007.

⁴³ Though see Heather 1996 for an alternative view.

⁴⁴ Lucy 1998, 107.

⁴⁵ Halsall 2007, 38.

⁴⁶ Kazanski and Périn 2017.

⁴⁷ For example, Wenskus 1961; Pohl 1988; Wolfram 1988. See chapters in Gillett 2002 for a critical re-evaluation of the concept of ethnogenesis.

⁴⁸ Reynolds 1985; Yorke 2000.

⁴⁹ Pohl 1997, 8–9.

royal houses or dynasties wished to be perceived at the time in which they were written. While we should not expect to be able to read our sources as 'simple reflections of reality', neither should they be "'opaque barriers" between ourselves and that reality'; rather, we can see them as 'direct expressions of continuous efforts of social identification'.⁵⁰ Alongside textually or orally recounted narratives, burial practices can be seen as another key symbolic strategy aimed at reproducing and maintaining social and ethnic traditions and structures in the present and future.⁵¹ We should not, of course, assume that burial rites always reflect conscious and intentional statements about ethnicity: as discussed in the previous chapter, just as 'not every action of a Christian is an explicitly Christian (religious) action, nor is every grave of an Anglo-Saxon an Anglo-Saxonist (ethnic) statement'.⁵² Nevertheless, it is apparent that burial rites and funerary events could be used to emphasise group ties when advantageous.

The crucial question for this chapter, then, is how we can apply these substantive, if often difficult to define, concepts of ethnicity and identity to early medieval Wessex; and, more specifically, what we might be able to infer from the funerary evidence. While a 'British' signature is elusive in the settlement data, it has been argued that the native population is more readily discernible in the burial record – both in the classic south-western sub-Roman cemeteries on the periphery of West Saxon influence and in cemeteries that have previously been categorised as 'Anglo-Saxon', such as Queenford Farm, Dorchester-on-Thames – often based on an absence of grave-goods and a well-organised layout of west-east graves.⁵³ We should, though, be wary of explaining variations in rites in terms of a simple binary between two discrete groups. As Guy Halsall has argued, 'the empirical grounds for interpreting ethnic identity from difference in burial ritual – whether from the presence or absence of grave-goods, the forms of object deposited or the forms of costume in which the dead were buried – are mostly very weak indeed'.⁵⁴ What further complicates the situation, as we shall see later in this chapter, is the fact that many of these putative 'British' cemeteries, particularly in Dorset, date from around the seventh century, when the deposition of grave-goods was in any case in universal decline and the arrangement of graves in many (though not all) burial grounds displayed greater uniformity.

Romanitas

Within the potential spectrum of identities, we should also consider to what extent a sense of 'Romanness' continued to have relevance for the majority of the 'ordinary' population of Wessex over the course of the period of study. In other words, is there any evidence to suggest that communities continued to draw on late Roman customs as part of their means of self-identification? The concept of *Romanitas* can be described as 'the notion of belonging politically or emotionally (or both)

⁵⁰ Pohl 2013, 49.

⁵¹ Pohl 1997, 8–9.

⁵² Maldonado 2013, 7.

⁵³ Rippon *et al.* 2015, 10–11.

⁵⁴ Halsall 2017, 192.

to a universal order and culture associated in one way or another with the Roman Empire',⁵⁵ a sense of adherence to Roman identity or perhaps a nostalgic desire to recapture the power of Rome. Place-name and archaeological evidence attests to the fact that the Roman buildings were widespread and highly visible in the landscape of early medieval England.⁵⁶ Ruined Roman stone and masonry buildings would undoubtedly have provided a strong visual contrast given that the dominant Anglo-Saxon architectural tradition was in timber,⁵⁷ as indeed was that of western Britain.⁵⁸ Moreover, the permanence of stone, in comparison with the ephemeral and organic qualities of trees and timber, is likely have had implications for how these built structures were conceptualised. *The Ruin*, a poem preserved within the tenth-century *Exeter Book*, depicts the picturesque splendour of a decaying city, almost certainly *Aquae Sulis* (Bath, Somerset). The stone-built city is described as 'the work of giants',⁵⁹ although this is probably a metaphorical expression rather than a statement of literal belief.⁶⁰ The regionally diverse appropriation of Roman cult sites and recycling of Roman *spolia* became a key feature of the English landscape during and after the conversion, as the Augustinian mission encouraged the reaffirmation of 'Rome's stamp on its lost province'.⁶¹ A resurgence of interest in Roman or Late Antique-style fashions, architecture and expressions of power can be identified from around the seventh century, as the uptake of this package of continental influences became an important political strategy for royal and ecclesiastical elites.⁶²

How might *Romanitas* have been expressed in the grave? The 'magpie-like tendency' of early medieval individuals to collect and adapt Roman objects has long been observed in both funerary and settlement contexts.⁶³ A considerable degree of selectivity is apparent in the curation and funerary deposition of Roman objects. Coins pierced for suspension are particularly common, alongside a wealth of other objects, including brooches, vessels and keys. The three perforated Roman coins found with the apparently isolated Early Anglo-Saxon inhumation at Castle Eaton, adjacent to the Upper Thames river, together with the numerous Roman items found within the sixth-century cemetery at Barrow Clump, both outlined in preceding chapters, constitute two funerary examples in the area of study. This practice of reuse seems to reach a zenith in the sixth century – that is, apparently after a short post-Roman hiatus, but preceding the conversion of Wessex and the concurrent resurgence of elite interest in the Roman world. Moreover, such items are not restricted to 'elite' graves but are widespread in 'ordinary' community cemeteries at this time. The bearing of items of Roman manufacture does continue into the seventh and perhaps early eighth centuries, in an evolved format. Some hanging bowls, deposited in the graves of both men and women in the seventh century, may

⁵⁵ Turner 1998, 1.

⁵⁶ Bell 2005, 19.

⁵⁷ Shapland 2013, 27.

⁵⁸ Laing 1975, 382–3.

⁵⁹ Mackie 1934.

⁶⁰ Bell 2005, 21.

⁶¹ Blair 2005, 188.

⁶² Morris 1989; Bell 2005; Semple 2013, 132–6.

⁶³ Williams and Newman 2006, 173.

be of Roman origin.⁶⁴ New items of jewellery that incorporate glassware fragments, such as millefiori, and other materials of Roman manufacture also begin to appear in high-status female graves at this time (such as Woodyates Inn, Dorset). This incarnation of the phenomenon we can more confidently associate with a revival of *Romanitas* and continental influence.⁶⁵

While some Roman items may have been chosen for their practical value or were merely coveted as curiosities, it has also been suggested that certain *objets trouvés* were thought to be imbued with amuletic or apotropaic properties.⁶⁶ Eckardt and Williams, meanwhile, argued that it was the remote antiquity of Roman objects that gave them their appeal, allowing them to be used as blank canvases to 'define social memories relating to the past'.⁶⁷ Although this argument does presuppose that the bearers of these objects were unaware of their 'biographies' or historical context, it is perhaps quite reasonable to assume that the majority of individuals living in ordinary communities could not have possessed any kind of accurate historical knowledge about such pieces.

Roger White was the first to attempt to comprehensively collate and examine the corpus of Roman finds from early medieval burials.⁶⁸ White noted that Roman items were disproportionately common in the graves of women and children, hinting at the signalling of elements of social identity other than ethnicity.⁶⁹ Indeed, White rejected the idea that ethnicity could be inferred from burial with such artefacts. But perhaps these modes of identity signalling need not be mutually exclusive. These portable objects, just like the more coherent, bombastic 'Anglian' material culture suites of this period, may have contributed to the construction of 'all kinds of identities, including but not limited to gender, sexuality, age and ethnicity'.⁷⁰ Rather than seeing these articles as passive signifiers of descent, it makes more sense to view them in the context of the invention of local and regional traditions. As Adrián Maldonado has argued, the incorporation of Roman stonework into cist graves in Scotland is more likely to signify a deliberate statement, 'whether of land claims of the family group involved in the funerary ritual, or about the specific texture and character of the stone', rather than 'an explicit sense of *Romanitas*'.⁷¹ The use of local Romano-British masonry in grave-linings at Monkton Deverill in Wiltshire and Worth Matravers in Dorset can perhaps be conceptualised in a similar light. Certainly, more contextual analysis is needed to reveal the social implications of this heterogeneous category of practices related to the gathering, display and concealment of material of Roman manufacture in Anglo-Saxon England.

In funerary contexts it is crucial to consider the grave tableau as a whole, and of course the wider landscape setting, rather than isolating certain artefacts. On the face of it, we could speculate that the Roman objects found at Barrow Clump were 'heirlooms', deposited in the graves as a means of emphasising the Romano-British

⁶⁴ Geake 1999; Hines and Bayliss 2013, 475.

⁶⁵ Geake 1999, 17.

⁶⁶ Meaney 1981.

⁶⁷ Eckardt and Williams 2003, 146, 159.

⁶⁸ White 1988.

⁶⁹ Gowland 2007.

⁷⁰ Martin 2015, 236.

⁷¹ Maldonado 2013, 15.

ancestry of individuals or of the kin group. Yet these objects belonged to a community that cannot be defined in simple ethnic terms. The reuse both of these items and of the ancient barrow testifies to the ingenuity of an evolving society in incorporating elements of the past into new customs.⁷²

Acculturation or segregation?

Irrespective of the exact proportion of the population of Early Anglo-Saxon Wessex who were actually continental incomers, the emergence of a new social order and *modus vivendi* undoubtedly heralded new senses of belonging and exclusion. But should we see Early Anglo-Saxon society as overwhelmingly defined by socio-ethnic division, with the dominant Anglo-Saxons effectively carrying out a campaign of 'apartheid' or 'a particularly extreme case of cultural domination' against the economically and legally disadvantaged Britons?⁷³ This is how some have conceptualised the mechanism by which the Old English language and continental DNA came to have such a decisive impact, in the absence of any convincing archaeological evidence for mass migration or violent population replacement.⁷⁴ The Law Code of Ine, king of Wessex, promulgated sometime between AD 688 and 693,⁷⁵ provides a 'rare glimpse of Britons living within an Anglo-Saxon kingdom around the turn of the eighth century'.⁷⁶ It paints a somewhat different picture of relations between 'Britons' and 'West Saxons' to that portrayed by Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which give the impression that the only means of interaction in this period was in the context of warfare. Instead, it suggests that a degree of co-existence between the two groups, if not total assimilation of Britons into West Saxon identity and culture, had been achieved by the late seventh century.⁷⁷ Britons are afforded legal status, albeit inferior to that of West Saxon individuals, and their *wergelds* are substantially though not drastically lower.⁷⁸ As Woolf has argued, these desultory concessions may reflect an insidiously effective strategy of gradually eroding British wealth and influence while maintaining stability and civility in the region.⁷⁹

Close reading of these chapters of Ine's law code suggests that accentuating, or even contriving, an ethnic divide may have benefited those who wished to maintain control of Wessex and expand its territory. Certainly, the impression given by contemporary writers on both 'sides' is certainly one of division and discord. Yet the family tree of the Gewissan kingdom in the sixth and seventh centuries seems to tell a different story, interspersed as it is with Brittonic-derived names,⁸⁰ intimating

⁷² White 1990, 146.

⁷³ Ward-Perkins 2000; Thomas *et al.* 2006; 2008; Woolf 2007.

⁷⁴ Härke 2011, 19–20.

⁷⁵ Attenborough 1922, 36–61. This is the earliest West Saxon law code to survive, but does so only as an appendix to the Laws of Alfred in a manuscript dating to c. 930.

⁷⁶ Grimmer 2007, 102. This law code is, however, likely to have been subject to adaptation and adjustment between the late seventh and late ninth centuries, when Alfred appended it to his own new code.

⁷⁷ Yorke 1995, 72.

⁷⁸ Law Code of Ine, cap. 23–4 (Attenborough 1922, 42–5).

⁷⁹ Woolf 2007, 127–9.

⁸⁰ Yorke 1990, 138–9; 1995, 49–50.

a close involvement of prominent local families in the West Saxon lineage. Should we view this as indicative of successful early integration between different communities in the region, or is it more telling that no attempt appears to have been made to formally connect the genealogies of the British (or Welsh) and Anglo-Saxon royal families?⁸¹

Post-imperial 'transitions'

Scholarly views on the extent of continuity, or discontinuity, of a characteristically Romano-British way of life in post-Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon England have been markedly polarised. The political and economic climate of the fifth century in Britain is traditionally perceived as largely catastrophic, characterised by profound and sudden change involving the total collapse and disintegration of society, including systems of governance, pottery production and building construction.⁸² This interpretation partly stems from the same paradigm which, as we have already seen, draws upon problematic historical sources and place-name evidence to support a model of mass invasion and near total population replacement in lowland Britain by continental incomers. Proponents of a discontinuity hypothesis have not, however, necessarily attributed this version of events directly to migration but rather to an internal societal collapse and cultural void, creating a 'discernible post-Roman but non-Saxon interlude' from which a hybrid post-apocalyptic society later emerged.⁸³

Others have argued for a considerable degree of continuity, proposing that there was a gradual and incremental evolution or transformation of Romano-British social and economic practices and institutions over the course of the fifth and early sixth centuries.⁸⁴ Ken Dark has linked the demise of Romano-British culture to the concept of 'living memory': that is, it took approximately a century for the collective memory of Roman Britain to die out, paving the way for the more concrete changes in political organisation and material culture seen in the late sixth and seventh centuries.⁸⁵ In this model, many commonalities are identified with the rest of Late Antique Europe, in terms of a shared but regionally variable Romano-Christian culture and a relatively stable territorial structure derived in part from Iron Age 'tribal' land units.⁸⁶ The notion of a Late Antique period in Britain within a pan-European context does, however, remain contentious.⁸⁷ While few would now argue that this was not a period of profound change in socio-economic terms, extreme models of continuity or discontinuity are inappropriate in the context of the rural landscape, for example. Indeed, a degree of continuity at an agricultural level is generally accepted, even by those who otherwise argue for an abrupt

⁸¹ Ward-Perkins 2000, 515.

⁸² E.g. Brown 1974; Esmonde Cleary 1989; Faulkner 2000.

⁸³ Esmonde Cleary 1989, xi.

⁸⁴ E.g. Wilson 1981; Dark 2000; Pryor 2004.

⁸⁵ Dark 2000, 228–9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁷ See papers in Collins and Gerrard 2004.

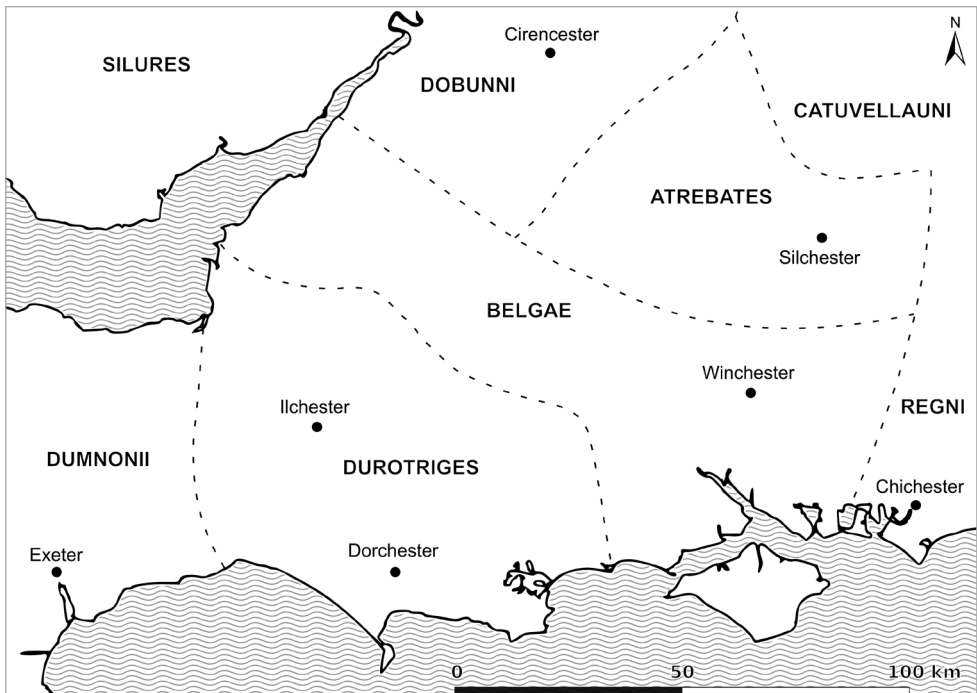


Figure 26. Postulated boundaries of Roman *civitates* in Wessex (after Millett 1990, 67; Todd 1981, 125; Yorke 1995, figure 2).

collapse of Roman Britain.⁸⁸ In Wessex, while pollen and molluscan evidence does signal a degree of woodland regeneration in certain areas, and a perceptible shift towards pasture on the chalk downland, there are no indications of the large-scale abandonment of agricultural land or a marked decline in the intensity of landscape exploitation.⁸⁹ Given that the rural population far outweighed the urban, this provides perhaps the clearest indication that, for the majority of the inhabitants of post-Roman Britain, surviving as subsistence farmers, no dramatic transition was experienced in the fifth century, despite the more abrupt economic and political effects of post-imperial change.⁹⁰

By the late Iron Age, the area that was to become Wessex was divided between different territorial groups, which in turn provided a framework for the Roman *civitates*. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the precise boundaries of these units, it is known that the territories of the Belgae and Durotriges fell within Wessex, as did parts of the land belonging to the Dobunni, Atrebates, Dumnonii and Regni (Figure 26).⁹¹ The *civitates* do not correspond with the later shire boundaries, with the possible exception of parts of the border between the *civitas Durotrigum* and the *civitas Belgarum*, which may correspond with the Somerset–Wiltshire boundary

⁸⁸ For example, Esmonde Cleary 1989; and see Rippon *et al.* 2015, 112–13.

⁸⁹ Rippon *et al.* 2015, 167, 219, 338–9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁹¹ Yorke 1995, 4; Eagles 2004, 234.

in the Selwood Forest area and possibly the convergence of the Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire boundaries further south.⁹² The whole region was contained within the *Britannia Prima* diocese by the early fourth century, administrated from Cirencester.⁹³ The territory is varied in terms of the extent of Roman influence; Devon and western Somerset, controlled by the Dumnonii, show far fewer signs of Romanisation than the rest of what was to become Wessex. A network of roads connected the *civitates* capitals and lesser centres, supplementing the existing trackways along the ridges of hills and river valleys. High concentrations of villas can be observed around towns such as Bath and Ilchester.⁹⁴

There are some signs of an economic decline in Wessex in the last quarter of the fourth century, although opinions are varied as to whether this process was sudden or gradual. It is likely that a major overhaul of the defences of towns was carried out, perhaps after the arrival of Count Theodosius in AD 369, with bastions added at Bath, Ilchester and Winchester, and stone fortifications at *Cunetio* in Wiltshire.⁹⁵ In AD 406, three British claims were made to the imperial rule, and continental sources such as the Byzantine writer Zosimus record a British revolt in 409, the subsequent expulsion of imperial officials and, ultimately, severance from the Empire.⁹⁶ Coin issues and items manufactured elsewhere in the empire ceased to arrive in the British Isles after the first decade of the fifth century, and the insular pottery industry and market economy ended soon after.⁹⁷ As the production of new material culture was greatly reduced and styles were slow to be replaced, the archaeological record, arguably, can reveal only a limited picture of life in Wessex for most of the fifth century. Recent research into late Roman pottery styles in Dorset has, however, shown increasing evidence for new forms and fabrics into the early fifth century.⁹⁸

Esmonde Cleary has proposed that many villas and settlements suffered dereliction or conversion into places of ‘squatter’ occupancy as a consequence of the removal of the Roman tax system that had supported certain sectors of society.⁹⁹ This is a characteristically extreme scenario, however, and it is likely that many aspects of Roman infrastructure and a sense of *Romanitas* remained strong for at least a substantial part of the fifth century, if not longer. The occupation of rural settlements, such as Overton Down OD XII in Wiltshire, appears to have continued in a stable manner into the fifth century. Beyond AD 400, evidence for continuity is more elusive, although Fowler has argued that this site was occupied until c. 440.¹⁰⁰ Elsewhere in late fourth- and early fifth-century Wiltshire, work appears to have been carried out at villas in Ramsbury and Great Bedwyn and new mosaics were commissioned at Cherhill and Bradford-on-Avon. In Hampshire, evidence for the continuation of urban life beyond the early fifth century within its two former

⁹² *Ibid.*, 234.

⁹³ Yorke 1995, 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁵ Cunliffe 1993, 268–73.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁹⁷ Esmonde Cleary 1989.

⁹⁸ Gerrard 2010.

⁹⁹ Esmonde Cleary 1989, 73–5, 139–61.

¹⁰⁰ Fowler 2000b, 102–11; Draper 2006, 29.

civitas capitals, *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester) and *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester), remains elusive. There is, however, a strong case to suggest that the latter was occupied until as late as seventh century, before its abrupt abandonment.¹⁰¹ The Roman forts at *Portus Adurni* (Portchester) and *Clausentum* (Bitterne, on the eastern shore of the Itchen in modern Southampton), both of which produced sixth-century, if not fifth-century, artefacts, may also have remained in use.¹⁰²

Post-Roman society in the west

While the experience of communities inhabiting the western and south-western extremities of Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries undoubtedly differed in many respects from that of their neighbours to the east, certain fundamentally analogous processes were at play throughout the former province of Britannia. In western Wessex, as elsewhere, the changes afforded by the withdrawal of Roman administration gave rise to a patchwork of small polities, commanded by opportunistic individuals or 'petty kings' who seized what was available to them. This is not to say that the means by which these socio-political structures were ordered and manifested in the landscape, and the pace at which they developed, were not regionally distinctive.

A key recognised feature of the socio-economic and political geography of western and northern Britain – and, most notably here, Somerset – in this period is the reoccupation and refortification of Iron Age hillforts. These sites, as revealed through seminal excavations by Leslie Alcock in 1950s and 1960s at South Cadbury, Somerset, and at Dinas Powys, South Wales, functioned as high-status secular centres and provide the most substantive evidence for a controlling elite or 'aristocracy'.¹⁰³ Internally, such sites are characterised by the presence of timber halls and prestige craft-production activities such as non-ferrous metalworking and jewellery manufacture.¹⁰⁴ These were central places that, far from being isolated, were exceptionally well connected within exchange networks, as evidenced by imported pottery, amphorae and glassware from Byzantium and the eastern Mediterranean. Cadbury Congresbury, too, while not as intensively refortified as South Cadbury, provided ample evidence for occupation during the fifth, sixth and perhaps the early seventh centuries, and an even more impressive quantity and range of exotic imports.¹⁰⁵ Other Somerset hillforts with finds indicative of post-Roman reuse include Cannington, Ham Hill, Worlebury and Cadbury Tickenham, alongside numerous further potential candidates.¹⁰⁶ As Barbara Yorke has suggested, there is nothing to say that hillfort reoccupation did not occur in Dorset and in other areas of Wessex, too, and in the absence of any systematic studies outside Somerset we can only speculate that the phenomenon was much more widespread than the handful of known examples indicates.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Fulford *et al.* 2006a, 273–82.

¹⁰² Cunliffe 1993, 286.

¹⁰³ Alcock 1963; 1995; Yorke 1995, 19; Costen 2011, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Seaman 2013, 10.

¹⁰⁵ Rahtz *et al.* 1992; Costen 2011, 17.

¹⁰⁶ Burrow 1981.

¹⁰⁷ Yorke 1995, 20, 22–3.

The picture gleaned from the documentary evidence supports the notion that resistance to West Saxon political domination was initially strong in the west. The battle (or 'siege') of *Mons Badonicus*, thought to have taken place in the late fifth or early sixth century, is cited by Gildas and Bede as a key event that ensured the continued British primacy over the region.¹⁰⁸ One postulated location of this battle is Badbury Rings, close to the confluence of the Rivers Tarrant and Stour in north-east Dorset.¹⁰⁹ Here, excavations by the National Trust produced radiocarbon dates that strongly suggest that the hillfort was refortified in the late fifth or early sixth century, and it is tempting to conjecture that this correlates with such an event.¹¹⁰ The apparent British victory at this battle is generally considered to explain the absence here of fifth- and earlier sixth-century furnished cemeteries – such as those found in the Salisbury Avon valley in Wiltshire or the Test and Itchen valleys in Hampshire – and the near total lack of known Anglo-Saxon-style burials west of the Stour for at least a century after the event.¹¹¹ Yorke has suggested that the 'Saxon' settlements of the Salisbury Avon valley did not come under the control of the Gewisse until the late sixth century, which then provided a 'launching pad for expansion into west Wiltshire and Dorset'.¹¹² Teresa Hall has also argued that the lack of 'pagan' cemeteries in Dorset implies that a 'Saxon infiltration of Dorset' did not take place until the third quarter of the seventh century, 'following the defeat of the British at Penselwood in 658'.¹¹³ While intense political reconfigurations were undoubtedly a feature of this zone at this time, we should be mindful that such 'invasionist' narratives derive from fairly tenuous historical accounts and are not necessarily supported by the archaeological evidence.

The earthworks of Bokerley Dyke are thought to have both reflected and exerted an active influence on the early medieval settlement patterns of eastern Dorset. Bruce Eagles has argued that the eastern limit of the *civitas* of the Durotriges followed the line of the dyke, and that Teffont, which derives from 'spring on the boundary', north of the Nadder in Wiltshire, also lay along this border.¹¹⁴ It is possible, however, that the latter name refers to a different boundary, perhaps with the territory of the Wylve valley. The archaeological evidence suggests that the dyke was augmented in the early post-Roman period, although the earthworks are not truly defensive in character and are mostly unfinished.¹¹⁵ It has been argued that, together with Selwood Forest and West Wansdyke, Bokerley formed a frontier between native Romano-British communities and advancing 'Anglo-Saxons' in the fifth and early sixth centuries, and that the earthworks were intended to deter movement and control access to the Dorchester area along the Ackling Dyke Roman road.¹¹⁶ Combs Ditch, another east-facing ditch, near Blandford Forum and 5km west of the Stour, is also thought to have been

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Myres 1986, 159–60; cf. Burkitt and Burkitt 1990.

¹¹⁰ Papworth 2011, 182–3.

¹¹¹ Eagles 1994; Yorke 1995; Hall 2000.

¹¹² Yorke 1995, 60.

¹¹³ Hall 2000, 2.

¹¹⁴ Eagles 2004.

¹¹⁵ Bowen 1990, 40.

¹¹⁶ Eagles 1994; Yorke 1995, 23–4.

refurbished in the late Roman or early post-Roman period. Eagles has suggested that the area between these dykes, centred on Badbury Rings and extending as far north as Pen Hill, formed a *pagus* or territory under 'Saxon' control by the sixth century, attested by findspots in this area and a burial with sixth-century Anglo-Saxon grave-goods at Oakley Down.¹¹⁷ The archaeological evidence for such a territory is, however, scant.

Early Anglo-Saxon findspots are sparsely distributed across Dorset, with isolated artefacts accounting for most of the fifth- and sixth-century material. An equal-armed brooch and part of a cruciform brooch, probably dating from the first half of the fifth century and thought to be some of the earliest Anglo-Saxon finds, have been discovered along the River Stour, in the shadow of the Iron Age hillfort of Hod Hill.¹¹⁸ Continuous occupation from the late Roman period through to the early medieval period is most likely to have occurred on the periphery of Dorchester at Poundbury, where both a sub-Roman settlement and its Romano-British predecessor, which itself had continued in use into the fifth century, have been identified.¹¹⁹ The sub-Roman settlement, which incorporated remnants of the Roman cemetery including mausolea, was occupied from the fifth probably until the early seventh century.¹²⁰ James Gerrard's research into South-East Dorset Orange Wiped Ware has shown that 'sunken-featured buildings' of a distinctive type were associated with this late fourth- and fifth-century fabric.¹²¹ While Dorset so far lacks the *Grubenhäuser* present in many areas of the chalk and limestone downlands of southern England,¹²² the buildings at Poundbury are potential candidates for a late Roman and early post-Roman architectural form.¹²³ In Somerset, meanwhile, what is thought to be the first Early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building ever found in the county, and indeed the westernmost example in England, has recently been excavated at Hinkley Point.¹²⁴

Beyond this, archaeological data on post-Roman secular life in general in western Wessex are undeniably sparse.¹²⁵ By the Middle Anglo-Saxon period, social, economic and settlement development is considered to have been driven by ecclesiastical patronage through monastic houses and perhaps royal residences. Two proto-industrial sites provide the only potential evidence, albeit indirect, for such developments: Chantry Fields in Gillingham, where two grain-drying ovens were archaeomagnetically and radiocarbon dated to the seventh or eighth century,¹²⁶ and Worgret, near Wareham, where the timbers of a possible watermill, with evidence for iron smelting, have been dated to the late seventh century.¹²⁷

¹¹⁷ Eagles 2004.

¹¹⁸ Eagles 1994, 13.

¹¹⁹ Keen 1984, 205; Green 1987.

¹²⁰ Green 1987; 2004.

¹²¹ Gerrard 2010.

¹²² Heaton 1992, 125; Tipper 2004.

¹²³ Green 1987; 2004; Gerrard 2010, 306.

¹²⁴ Joyce *et al.* 2014.

¹²⁵ Welch 1985; Heaton 1992, 125.

¹²⁶ Barker 1984; Keen 1984; Heaton 1992, 125.

¹²⁷ Hinton 1992a.

Burial practices in flux

Mortuary practices in the late Roman world are broadly typified by regional variation alongside an emerging homogeneity and regularity manifested in 'managed' extramural cemeteries, suggesting some form of centralised control of funerary rites, whether by a secular or a Christian elite.¹²⁸ By contrast, the burial record for the fifth and sixth centuries in much of England is characterised by considerable divergences in funerary practice. Furnished rites are common but by no means all-pervading, and the quantities and types of grave-goods represented are variable. A range of orientations was chosen for inhumation. It is apparent that mourners were also able to choose between cremation and inhumation in many areas, though these choices were far from arbitrarily interchangeable and may have been a distinguishing feature of particular social groups. Both rites are represented in varying proportions regionally and nationally: while large cremation cemeteries, probably serving multiple settlements, are most common in East Anglia and Lincolnshire, even there it is not ubiquitous. Cremation was also practised on a smaller scale in much of southern England alongside inhumation in mixed-rite cemeteries.

In Wessex, a clear east–west divide can be identified in the use of cremation, reflecting the fact that south-west England is one of the few areas where this practice is virtually absent for the early medieval period. At two Hampshire cemeteries – Portway East and Alton – cremations outnumbered inhumations, while at Worthy Park and St Mary's Stadium I between a third and a half of all burials were cremations. In contrast, fewer than ten early medieval cremation burials are known from the whole of Wiltshire, and none at all from Dorset or Somerset. Indeed, no cremation graves of this period have been found to the west of the Salisbury Avon, with the exception of six examples from three sites within 2km of this river: Chalton Plantation, Bargates and Iford Bridge.

In the west, unfurnished or sparsely furnished inhumation burials, commonly regarded as belonging to a native British tradition, have tended to be approached and interpreted independently from their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.¹²⁹ Graves with a paucity or absence of accompanying artefacts have in general suffered from a lack of engagement due to the perception that they are less valuable as a source of information or problems surrounding their dating.¹³⁰ The increasing accessibility and accuracy of scientific dating over the past few decades, however, has enabled the identification of early medieval burials that may otherwise have been misinterpreted.¹³¹

The cemetery type defined as 'sub-Roman', epitomised by Cannington in Somerset (Figure 27), is a distinctive feature of south-west England that is increasingly recognised over a wider geographical area.¹³² These cemeteries are characterised by rows of west–east-orientated and sometimes stone-lined inhumation

¹²⁸ Williams 2006, 23–4; Philpott 1991.

¹²⁹ Petts 2009.

¹³⁰ Lucy and Reynolds 2002, 11; Cherryson 2005a; Maldonado 2013.

¹³¹ Green 1984; McKinley 1999a; Gerrard 2010; Aston 2011.

¹³² Phillips 1966; Rahtz 1977; Rahtz *et al.* 2000; Williams 2006, 211–14; Rippon *et al.* 2015, 11.

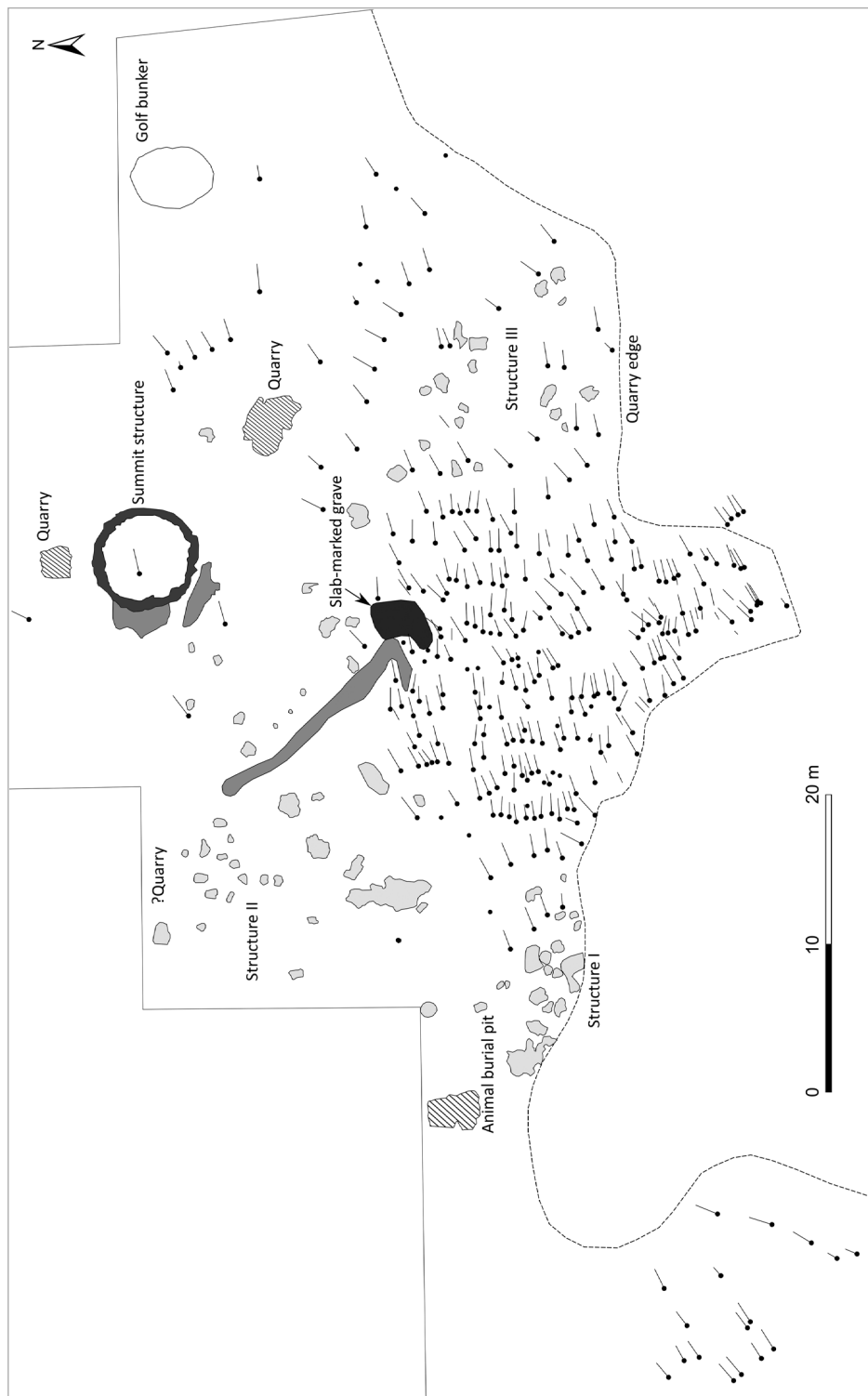


Figure 27: Plan of Cannington cemetery, Somerset (redrawn after Rahtz 1977).

graves with few or no grave-goods.¹³³ In Dorset, while remaining elusive until recent decades, cemeteries considered to be of the sub-Roman tradition are now fairly well attested, notably in the Dorchester area.¹³⁴ Longevity of use is another common attribute of these cemeteries. Indeed, the burial traditions of Dorset and Somerset are characterised by striking continuity in both location and practice.¹³⁵ Radiocarbon dating indicates that Cannington, for example, was in use from the fifth century well into the ninth century. It is possible to identify a number of burial sites in Somerset and Dorset with phases of use spanning the late Roman, post-Roman and early medieval periods, although some seem to have been disused before West Saxon political dominance began to take hold there.¹³⁶ No definitive break in the nature of burial traditions can be discerned at any point between the fourth and eighth centuries in western Wessex despite the conversion of the wider area to Christianity, although some sites went out of use in the sixth or seventh centuries.

While cemeteries typical of the sub-Roman tradition have tended to dominate in discussions of mortuary practice in post-Roman western Britain, a degree of diversity can nevertheless be identified.¹³⁷ Another type is characterised by north–south alignment, a range of grave-goods – pottery vessels, coins, hobnailed shoes and boots and, for women, 'low value' items of jewellery, such as hairpins or bracelets – and a wider variety of burial positions, including crouched and prone.¹³⁸ Burials belonging to both this category and the sub-Roman type have been found in the late Roman–post-Roman cemetery at Poundbury, Dorset.¹³⁹

Exploring variation in the funerary customs and landscapes of Wessex

The recognition that divergent burial rites occurred concurrently in fifth- to ninth-century Wessex is fundamental to this study. In the established view, the burial record of the region is dominated by an initial polarisation between eastern and western counties, followed by a gradual diffusion on an east–west trajectory of a distinctively 'Anglo-Saxon' cultural package manifested by innovative new furnished funerary customs. Yet no two cemeteries are the same: even at a local level, each exhibits idiosyncrasies in terms of funerary ritual and dress, reflecting perhaps different experiences or cultural admixes.¹⁴⁰ An understanding of the extent of local and regional variation in interactions between different groups (including expression through mortuary rites) has rightly been described as 'key to understanding the post-Roman landscape'.¹⁴¹ It remains here to explore and interrogate the nature of variations in burial practice, whether in disparate parts of the region or on a more localised scale. To what extent can, or indeed should, such patterns

¹³³ Cf. Petts 2004; Davey 2005, 108–9; Rippon 2012, 67, 302–3.

¹³⁴ Green 1984; Farwell and Molleson 1993.

¹³⁵ Blair 2005, 26.

¹³⁶ Turner 2006, 133–4.

¹³⁷ Petts 2000; 2009.

¹³⁸ Petts 2004, 78.

¹³⁹ Farwell and Molleson 1993; Green 2004; Petts 2004.

¹⁴⁰ Yorke 1995, 44–5.

¹⁴¹ Rippon 2000, 58.

be interpreted as indicative of different cultural or ethnic affiliations? Are the still pervasive ethnically loaded labels referenced in the title of this chapter justified? And can we truly identify a progressive, or punctuated, westward expansion of 'Anglo-Saxon' culture?

Of course, while funerary practices can express social identities, they cannot be read in isolation as representative of wider socio-political processes. Variations from place to place, or even internally within cemeteries, may not accurately reflect social or cultural differences, and we should not overlook the element of choice involved or the agency of mourners. What therefore follows is an integrated, landscape-rooted, diachronic exploration of the patterns and variations in funerary customs. The ensuing analysis is broadly geographically structured – though concentrated on the detailed examination of a number of *pays*, rather than representing a comprehensive review of the entire corpus – commencing in the eastern part of the study area and moving westwards in an approximate way.

Hampshire Downs

The largest defined *pays* in the study area, the Hampshire Downs essentially encompass two landscape character areas: the crescent-shaped band of high downland in the north and east, and the lower downland to its west, punctuated by the principal river valleys (Figure 28). Throughout the *pays* the predominant underlying geology is White Chalk, with Grey Chalk on the periphery. The pedology is generally characterised as well drained and calcareous, with heavier loamy soils resulting from the superficial clay-with-flints deposits on hilltops and ridges, where there is also increased woodland cover. The extent to which the highest downs were wooded in the past is a matter for debate, as little palaeoenvironmental attention has been focused here in comparison with the central Wessex chalklands of Wiltshire and Dorset. It is nevertheless apparent that the high downland of Hampshire formed a boundary between two major cultural and ecological zones in the Neolithic: the Wessex region, which comprised a mosaic of woodland and woodland clearings, and Sussex, which possessed more uniform woodland cover.¹⁴² Widespread small-scale clearance is likely to have taken place during the Bronze Age,¹⁴³ and field systems and cropmarks associated with Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman features indicate that the downland landscape was exploited for cultivation in these periods.¹⁴⁴ Along the major rivers, such as the Upper Itchen, Roman villas tended to be sited up on the downland rather than in the valleys, in contrast with the prevailing Early Anglo-Saxon pattern of settlement.¹⁴⁵ A degree of woodland regeneration may have taken place in the late Roman and post-Roman periods. The southern part of the wooded downland plateau is known to have been covered by a great *haga*, a 'game enclosure or uncleared forest', in the middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Allen and Gardiner 2009.

¹⁴³ Drewett 1978, 27.

¹⁴⁴ Allen 1996.

¹⁴⁵ Fasham and Whinney 1991; Hawkes and Grainger 2003, 2–4.

¹⁴⁶ ASC 757; S283; Grundy 1927, 190.

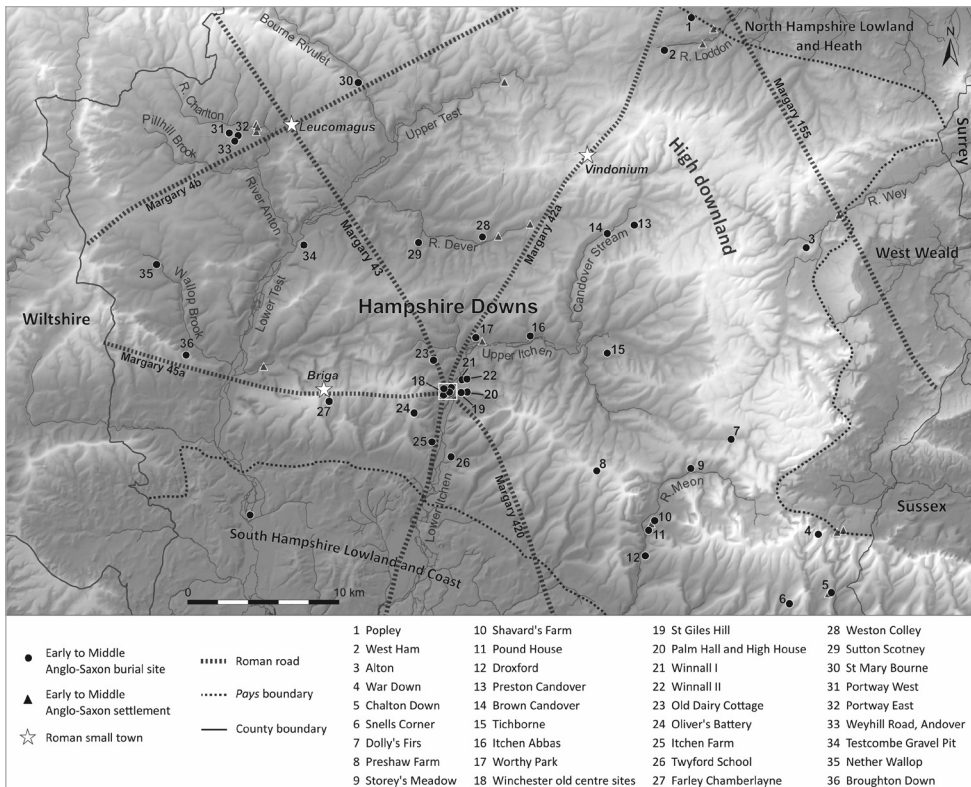


Figure 28. Sites in the Hampshire Downs *pays*.

Spatially, the most striking feature of the funerary evidence from this *pays* is, as discussed in previous chapters, the riverine, valley-based pattern of activity. This is especially true for the community cemeteries, upon which this review will focus. Whereas the small minority of isolated burial sites tend to be found on higher ground, at a greater distance from watercourses, a number of significant cemeteries are located in the major valleys that dissect the downland: those of the Wey, Meon, Itchen, Dever and Charlton.

In the Wey valley, in the eastern extremity of the *pays*, close to the interface with the gauls and greensands of the West Weald, is the extensive Early Anglo-Saxon mixed-rite cemetery at Alton. The assemblages accompanying the c. 150 inhumations and cremations suggest that the cemetery was in use between the fifth and seventh centuries. An early seventh-century male burial in Grave 16 was accompanied by exceptional prestige items, including a sword and an ornate silver gilt buckle comparable to buckles found in princely graves at Taplow in Buckinghamshire and Broomfield in Essex. This buckle, as well as a sixth-century square-headed brooch, demonstrates connections beyond the mere provincial, and particularly with Kent.¹⁴⁷ Numerous Roman objects had also been deposited with

¹⁴⁷ Evison 1988, 45.

the burials: Grave 41, for example, was accompanied by a bronze Roman key similar to that found at Overton Down 6b, Wiltshire.¹⁴⁸

To the south, in the heart of the Meon valley at Droxford, another large fifth- to sixth-century cemetery was discovered during the construction of the Meon Valley Railway at the turn of the twentieth century. Although numerous artefacts were recovered at the time by local antiquarian William Dale, no formal recording of these investigations survives.¹⁴⁹ Fieldwork in 1973 revealed that the original ground level had been almost completely obliterated by railway, road and building works. However, excavations carried out the following year on a narrow strip of surviving land revealed forty-one graves – each containing an extended inhumation – and two further probable grave cuts. The majority were orientated west–east, although four were aligned north–south. The number of exposed graves probably exceeds 200, and around 100 further burials may lie to the north of the most recently excavated area. A number of objects of Roman manufacture, including a probable third-century ‘crossbow’ brooch, were also found to have been deposited as grave-goods,¹⁵⁰ suggesting that such items were retained or acquired as heirlooms, keepsakes or simply desirable items, as also evidenced at Barrow Clump in Wiltshire.

At Shavard’s Farm, Meonstoke, 2km north of Droxford, the remains of at least twenty-one individuals were discovered – of which fifteen graves were fully excavated – between 1972 and 1999.¹⁵¹ The cemetery is located on a river terrace promontory c. 500m east of the River Meon and 300m south-east of Meonstoke Roman villa, into the ruins of which Early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured buildings were found to have been cut.¹⁵² It could be speculated that this villa estate formed the focus of a *regio*, from which the hundred of Meonstoke perhaps later derived. The majority of the burials at Shavard’s Farm are thought to be seventh-century in date, although two, which lie c. 20–30m south-west of the main group, may feasibly date from the preceding century. One seventh-century burial – in Grave 3 – stood out as particularly high-status: it was accompanied by items such as a type SB5-c ‘sugar-loaf’ shield boss and sword, and was apparently marked by a standing post.¹⁵³ In Grave 4, adjacent to and oddly juxtaposed with this apparently high-status male burial, was a prone female with one arm bent behind the back, accompanied by a single knife.

A possible late Roman linear ditch, on a north–south orientation, appears to have influenced the layout of the burials in the cemetery.¹⁵⁴ Another notable feature of Shavard’s Farm is the extensive deposition of flint: in two cases, several large flints had been placed in the fill above the upper part of the skeleton, while layers of flint had been placed above the skull of two individuals.¹⁵⁵ In another case, the knee was raised and supported by chalk blocks and a flint placed above the kneecap. Although this latter practice is rare nationally, it is fairly common in Hampshire,

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴⁹ Dale 1903; 1906; Aldsworth 1978, 94.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁵¹ Devenish and Champion 1978; Stoodley and Stedman 2001.

¹⁵² Yorke 1995, 49.

¹⁵³ Stoodley and Stedman 2001, 165; Hines and Bayliss 2013, 159, 161.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁵⁵ Stoodley and Stedman 2001, 159.

also occurring at Droxford, Worthy Park, Winnall II and Portway East. A flint cairn, which may be either an earlier feature or contemporary with the burials, was located in a central position within the cemetery, perhaps emphasising the important role that the material played in the burial practices of this community. This was also an important building material in the area in the Roman period, as can be seen from the villa façade.

Looking eastwards from the Meon, I have already introduced in the previous chapter the group of sites at higher altitudes within the ostensibly peripheral frontier zone on the edge of the South Downs. Diverse and eclectic burial practices can be identified here and indeed throughout Hampshire, not only in the Early Anglo-Saxon period but, somewhat unusually, through the seventh and eighth centuries too, as Nick Stoodley has observed.¹⁵⁶ These are simultaneously reflective of earlier traditions yet boldly innovative, and not wholly typical of the period formerly referred to as the 'Final Phase' (see Chapter 5). In the grave, jewellery and dress accessories are scarce in some cemeteries, where traditionally male-gendered grave-goods, such as weapons, are prevalent – perhaps suggesting that the status and identities of women were expressed in other, less archaeologically evident, ways. A case in point is Snell's Corner, in this outlying south-eastern corner of the Hampshire Downs, where grave-goods included late sixth- or earlier seventh-century shield bosses (type SB4-b2),¹⁵⁷ spearheads, knives, bronze rings and a number of beads. The close contiguity and affinities with western Sussex are apparent; indeed, a cooking pot found with one of the burials at Snell's was described as 'pure South Saxon'.¹⁵⁸

Stoodley has noted the 'strategic' position of this site and the high proportion of males and male-gendered grave-goods, and has argued that the cemetery may have been associated with a military garrison.¹⁵⁹ Although garrisons certainly became an important aspect of civil defence during the reign of Alfred and the period of Viking incursions in the later ninth and tenth centuries, there is no evidence to suggest that they featured in the landscape of seventh-century Hampshire.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, of the thirty-three graves, only thirteen males, seven females and three juveniles could be conclusively identified.¹⁶¹ As it was not possible to ascertain the gender of the remaining ten individuals, and with such a small sample, it cannot be stated with any certainty that there was a gender imbalance; indeed, the excavator even remarked upon the 'high percentage of females'.¹⁶²

Central not only geographically to the Hampshire Downs, but also politically and economically to the established kingdom of Wessex, is the Itchen valley. The founding of a minster church in Winchester in the second quarter of the seventh century and the subsequent relocation of the West Saxon bishopric from the Gewissan domain of the Upper Thames valley to this former Roman *civitas* capital

¹⁵⁶ Stoodley 2010, 50.

¹⁵⁷ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 159, 334–5.

¹⁵⁸ Knocker 1955, 121; Meaney 1964, 100.

¹⁵⁹ Stoodley 1997, 220; Stoodley and Stedman 2001, 166.

¹⁶⁰ Baker and Brookes 2013.

¹⁶¹ Knocker 1955.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 119.

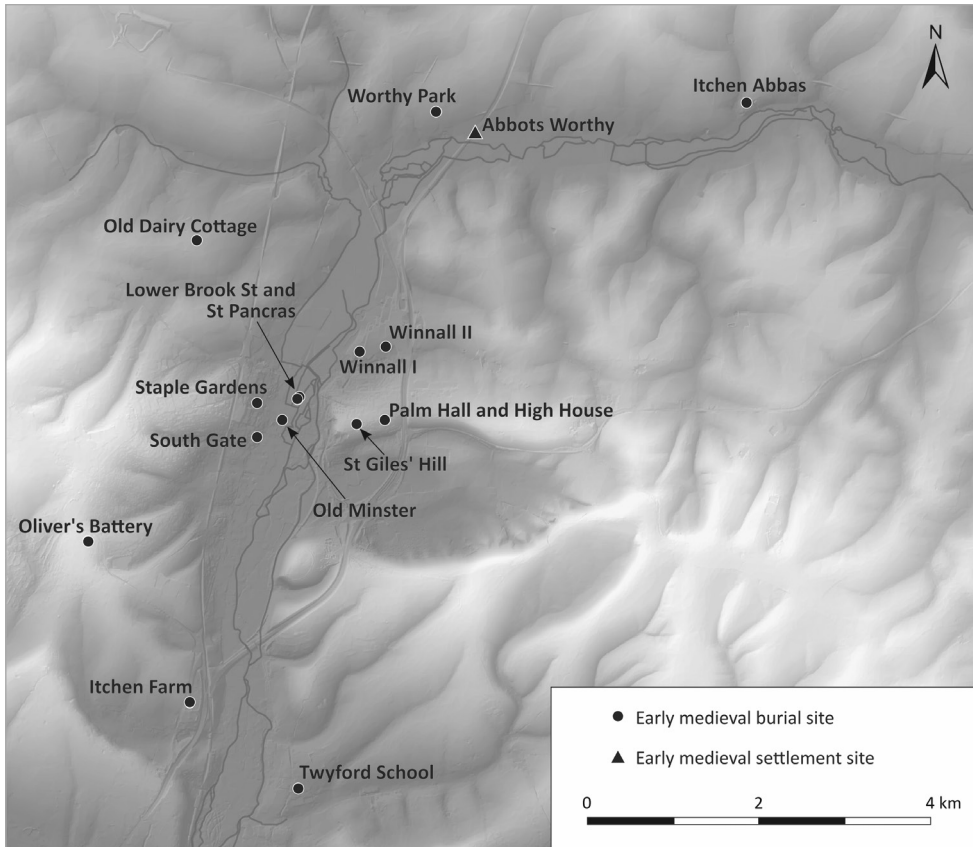


Figure 29. Sites in the Itchen valley, Hampshire.

on the banks of the Itchen heralded a decisive shift in power towards the area.¹⁶³ The establishment and growth of the trading *emporium* of *Hamwic* at the mouth of the River Itchen over the course of the seventh and eighth centuries and the development of a proto-urban centre in Winchester itself by the end of the Middle Anglo-Saxon period was supported and facilitated by increased agricultural production and manufacturing in the rural hinterland,¹⁶⁴ a further indicator of this area's ascendancy.

A group of cemeteries in the Upper and Lower Itchen valleys, to the north and south of Winchester respectively (Figure 29), are redolent of the enduring influence of the Roman inheritance in the wider environs of the town. At Itchen Abbas, 150m north of the Upper Itchen river, human remains were first discovered during the laying of a gas pipeline through the playing field of Itchen Abbas Primary School. A small-scale excavation in 1984 revealed in plan twenty inhumation burials, mostly aligned east–west, at a depth of just under a metre below existing ground

¹⁶³ Yorke 1989b, 93.

¹⁶⁴ Moreland 2000; Stoodley 2002.

level.¹⁶⁵ Only one north–south-aligned burial, which had been damaged during trench cutting, was excavated, and was found to contain an extended male skeleton accompanied by an iron spearhead, a sword and a knife, a bronze chape and two bronze belt fittings. Two further graves were excavated in 1986; one contained the skeleton of a young male accompanied by a bronze coin, the remains of a 'purse' and hobnails near the feet, while the other was unaccompanied.¹⁶⁶ In 1991, over 100 further funerary features, including cremations, were recorded, and around sixty graves were revealed in plan.¹⁶⁷ Three years later, a watching brief prompted the excavation of a grave containing the skeleton of an infant, accompanied by a vessel similar to a mid-fifth-century example found at Alton.¹⁶⁸ The grave-goods excavated in 1984 were also attributed to the mid–late fifth century, although some of the burials displayed characteristics of late Roman burial, such as the presence of hobnails.¹⁶⁹ Itchen Abbas is fairly unusual in that it demonstrates possible continuity of use from the Roman period to the early Middle Ages.

Recent further discoveries at Sunnybank, Itchen Abbas, less than 100m to the south (and considered part of the same site), during an evaluation by Wessex Archaeology in 2010,¹⁷⁰ are yet more intriguing. A probable pond barrow – rare for this part of Wessex – appears to have provided the focus for both Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon burials. Among several other graves, three north–south-orientated inhumation burials and a cremation just to the west of the barrow were interpreted as Roman, while a possibly coffined inhumation with the head to the west, within the circumference of the barrow, was interpreted as early medieval. The only other known example of the appropriation of this type of 'fancy' barrow in the study area is Winterbourne Gunner, which was also in use from the fifth century and is similarly positioned in very close proximity to a river.

Three and a half kilometres due west of the Itchen Abbas cemetery, and c. 5km north of Winchester, at Worthy Park, King's Worthy, ninety-four inhumations and forty-six cremations were uncovered in 1961–2, although these figures represent perhaps only half of the potential total number of graves.¹⁷¹ The majority of the inhumations were orientated with the head to the west, although in a considerable number of cases they were orientated north–south or south–north. The cremations were distributed throughout the cemetery. The finds suggest that the cemetery was in use between the fifth and seventh centuries AD. Grave 9 was accompanied by two pierced Roman coins and a Roman key, among other items, while Grave 30 had an exceptionally extensive assemblage, including thirty amber beads and nine Roman coins, perhaps collected in a bag or pouch.¹⁷² A few of the burials were unaccompanied, and some only had one item, such as a knife. This may indicate that these burials form a seventh-century group pertaining to the period in which the practice of depositing grave-goods declined in popularity. As mentioned in

¹⁶⁵ Youngs *et al.* 1985, 180–1.

¹⁶⁶ McCulloch 1991.

¹⁶⁷ McCulloch 1992.

¹⁶⁸ Nenck *et al.* 1995.

¹⁶⁹ Henig 1984, 199; Philpott 1991, 173.

¹⁷⁰ Wessex Archaeology 2010.

¹⁷¹ Hawkes and Grainger 2003.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 15–17, 34–41.

Chapter 1, evidence from the nearby settlement site at Abbots Worthy may suggest the continued exploitation of a Roman villa estate in the Upper Itchen valley.

In the Lower Itchen valley, south of Winchester, meanwhile, two funerary sites on opposite sides of the river exhibit the appropriation of sub-circular and linear prehistoric or Roman settlement features. Another apparently long-lived Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon community cemetery was found at Twyford School, 400m east of the river, during excavations by Wessex Archaeology in 2007. Eighteen inhumation graves were uncovered, although additional burials may have been previously destroyed by landscaping to the east of the excavated area.¹⁷³ Ten burials were accompanied by identifiable grave-goods, including shield bosses, a seax, disc brooches and a cabochon glass pendant, suggesting that the cemetery was in use between the late fifth or sixth century and the seventh or early eighth century. A small penannular ditch, c. 6m in diameter, with an opening on its south-eastern side, lay 25m to the east of the burials. Although this feature was tentatively proposed to represent a late prehistoric roundhouse, it was not firmly dated and may be contemporary with the burials.¹⁷⁴ The fact that no surviving early medieval burials were found within the ditch is, however, more suggestive of an earlier date for the construction of this feature. Post-built structures were also found just north of the penannular ditch, at about the same distance from the burials, but these are also more likely to be prehistoric features than contemporary funerary structures.¹⁷⁵

At Itchen Farm, 500m west of the Lower Itchen, two burials of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date were found during the excavation of a three-hectare site by TVAS in preparation for a new Park and Ride site.¹⁷⁶ The site is on the gentle slope of a south-east-facing chalk spur that overlooks the Itchen valley towards Twyford. The burials were placed adjacent to an extensive late Iron Age–Roman enclosure complex, and no other early medieval material was found anywhere else on the site. There was also a single late Roman (fourth- or very early fifth-century) burial, with a large amount of hobnails present in the grave. A Neolithic burial, an unenclosed Bronze Age settlement, including a post-built roundhouse, and numerous Roman trackway ditches were also excavated.

Grave 2045 was situated at a distance of c. 2m from the western side of the roundhouse, and was aligned with a Roman trackway located c. 4m to the south. In this grave, the skeleton of a young adult male had been interred in a supine position with the head tilted to face south towards the trackway, and a sarsen stone had been placed at each shoulder, curiously echoing the burial rite of a Neolithic child interment found on the same site.¹⁷⁷ The grave-goods comprised a small knife and the base of an early Roman pot, yet radiocarbon dating placed the burial in the sixth or earlier seventh century AD (cal. AD 533–643). Grave 2114 lay 19m to the north-west of Grave 2045 and contained the remains of an older male individual. The inhumation was aligned with two parallel routeways: the *Clausentum–Venta Belgarum* Roman road, c. 30m to the west, and a metalled late third- to early

¹⁷³ Dinwiddy 2011, 75.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁷⁶ Lewis and Preston 2012.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

fourth-century trackway c. 50m to the east. The skeleton lay supine with the head tilted to face west – towards the Roman road – and was buried with a small blade or spearhead, as well as residual fourth-century pottery sherds and the disarticulated leg bones of another individual. The radiocarbon date of cal. AD 602–667 suggests that this burial is broadly contemporary with Grave 2045.

The earthworks of the Iron Age or Romano-British enclosure are likely to have remained a prominent feature in the immediate landscape and may have been an influencing factor in the choice of burial site in the seventh century AD. Similarly, although perhaps less credibly, the ditch of the roundhouse could also have remained visible, attracting Grave 2114. It could be speculated that the enclosure sits on an established boundary. The isolation and unconventionality of the burials, combined with the paucity of grave-goods, could also be indicative of deviancy or outcast status, although exclusion from a conventional cemetery for this reason is unlikely at such an early date.

Two large predominantly later Anglo-Saxon cemeteries – Old Minster and Staple Gardens – and several smaller groups of burials, all apparently seventh-century or later in date, have been found within or just outside the outline of Roman *Venta Belgarum*. The fact that the entirety of the old centre of Winchester is underlain by Roman archaeology generates particular issues for the analysis of burial location, and it is important to consider whether Roman features were deliberately appropriated or whether direct association signifies only coincidental superimposition. It is also crucial to view individual incidences of funerary activity within the wider context of the 'reuse' of the Roman town for early medieval ecclesiastical and secular purposes.

Winnall I, on the eastern slopes of the Itchen, 1km north-east of the old centre of Winchester, and Winnall II, a further 300m to the north-north-east, remain type sites of the 'two cemetery' model, which sees the supersession of a fifth- to sixth-century burial ground by a newly founded cemetery in the seventh or eighth century.¹⁷⁸ This phenomenon appears to be peculiar to the northern half of Hampshire, although long-lived cemeteries spanning both periods, such as Worthy Park, are still far more prevalent in this area. Meaney and Hawkes drew attention to the apparent 'carelessness' of many of the depositions at Winnall II and to the persistence of 'pagan' indicators, such as the three instances of stoning (including one double burial) and three of decapitation, arguing that this suggested that Augustinian Christianity was slow to exert a significant effect on the burial traditions of the population, despite the establishment of the bishopric nearby in the mid-seventh century.¹⁷⁹ Extensive prehistoric settlement and funerary evidence has been uncovered on Winnall Down,¹⁸⁰ c. 450m north-east of Winnall II, and it is perhaps significant that the focus of funerary activity at Winnall shifted closer to these features in the seventh century.

Another classic example of a 'two cemetery' pairing – Portway East and Portway West, Andover – can be found in the north-west of the *pays* in the valley of the River Charlton, a tributary of the Test via the Anton. The earlier (fifth- to sixth- or

¹⁷⁸ Hyslop 1963; Boddington 1990. See Chapter 5.

¹⁷⁹ Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 30–2, 52.

¹⁸⁰ Fasham 1985.

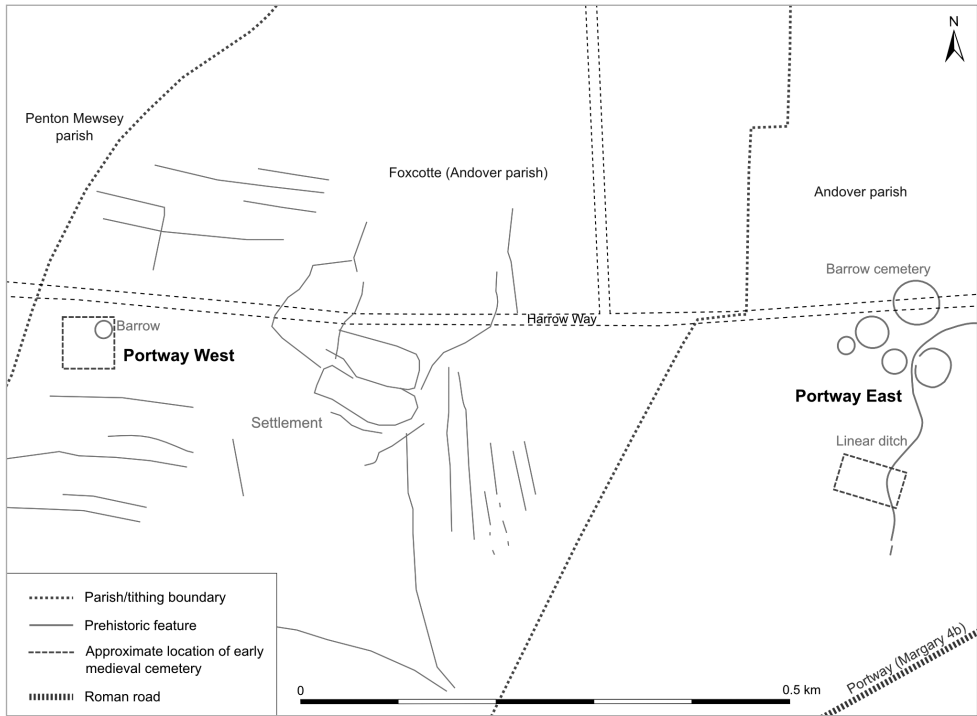


Figure 30. Plan of Portway East and West, Hampshire (after Stoodley 2006).

very early seventh-century) mixed-rite cemetery, Portway East, was investigated in 1981,¹⁸¹ following the excavation of its seventh-century successor, which lay 800m to the west, in the mid-1970s.¹⁸² The cemeteries are located 200m and 660m north-west of the 'Portway' Roman road (Margary 4b) respectively, just over 3km south-south-west of its intersection with the Ermin Way (Margary 43) at East Anton (Figure 30). A trackway known as the Harrow Way, which may be of prehistoric origin, and an Iron Age settlement lie between the two sites.¹⁸³ Both cemeteries were associated with Bronze Age barrows: four graves at the later Portway West site were focused around a small barrow, while the earlier burial ground lay c. 150m to the south of a more extensive barrow cemetery. At Portway West, several of the graves were also surrounded by penannular ring-ditches, part of the trend towards the above-ground marking and bounding of graves in this manner in the seventh century. Again, minority rites that could be categorised as 'deviant' are exhibited at both cemeteries, but particularly so at Portway West. The double burial of two decapitated males, for example, was located a couple of metres outside the ring-ditch closest to the Bronze Age barrow.¹⁸⁴

Albeit on an apparently smaller scale than Worthy Park, the cemetery at Weston

¹⁸¹ Stoodley 2006; 2007a.

¹⁸² Cook and Dacre 1985.

¹⁸³ Champion *et al.* 1974.

¹⁸⁴ Stoodley 2006, 67, 77.

Colley, Micheldever, in the Dever valley to the north of the Upper Itchen valley, is similarly an example of a long-lived funerary site, which displays evidence of innovation and evolution of burial practices from the fifth to seventh centuries. Here, twelve inhumation burials and four cremations were uncovered during University of Winchester excavations in 2003–6.¹⁸⁵ The site lies on the crest of a hill at 90m aOD, c. 250m north of the River Dever and 1km to the west of a sixth-century settlement site.¹⁸⁶ Human remains and numerous other finds had first emerged in the nineteenth century during railway construction, but no formal recording was carried out.¹⁸⁷ Of the three burials that were excavated in 2003, one was accompanied by a copper alloy supporting-arm brooch identified as belonging to Böhme's *Typ Perlberg* group and a 'Frankish' buckle, suggesting a later fifth-century date.¹⁸⁸ Metal detecting also located a pierced Roman coin, which may have derived from one of the graves.

Grave 4, excavated in 2004, was encompassed by a ring-ditch and was a particularly large grave incorporating flint packing (as in other cemeteries in this *pays* mentioned above) and evidence for a timber lining. It contained the inhumation of an adolescent female, accompanied by grave-goods including a necklet, purse, possible wooden box and knife.¹⁸⁹ Three cremations appeared to be placed within the ring-ditch and therefore postdate it, although the sequence was not clear. A fourth cremation seemed to have been cut by the ditch on the south-western side, and may therefore be earlier, perhaps dating from the fifth or sixth century. Pottery analysis has found that some of the sherds from the cremations found within the ring-ditch are seventh-century fabrics.¹⁹⁰ This is remarkably late for early medieval cremation, although not without precedent.¹⁹¹

The Hampshire Downs *pays* encompasses an extensive area within which, unsurprisingly, perceptibly distinctive zones can be identified in relation to the character and evolution of funerary practices during the fifth to ninth centuries AD. The earliest evidence derives from the numerous valley-based cemeteries, which in many cases reveal rites reminiscent of a Romano-British inheritance or, at a more localised level, apparent continuity of use from the late Roman period. Direct continuity of practices and persistence of place is most apparent in the Itchen valley, where the burial record (like the settlement evidence) is redolent of a relatively static population adopting new customs and material culture sets within a changing society. Late Roman rites such as interment with hobnail footwear are evidenced at Itchen Abbas and Itchen Farm into the fifth century, and Roman objects continued to be incorporated into assemblages in the fifth and sixth centuries at Alton, Droxford, Worthy Park. Unusual rites such as prone burial and decapitation, which in late Roman contexts have been interpreted as 'pagan' signifiers,¹⁹² continue in the early

¹⁸⁵ Fern and Stoodley 2003; 2004a; 2004b.

¹⁸⁶ Johnston 1998.

¹⁸⁷ Meaney 1964, 98.

¹⁸⁸ Böhme 1974, 10–14; Fern and Stoodley 2003, 13.

¹⁸⁹ Fern and Stoodley 2004a, 9.

¹⁹⁰ N. Stoodley pers. comm. 2012.

¹⁹¹ St Mary's Stadium I, Southampton, and Apple Down I, West Sussex, have also yielded certain or probable seventh-century cremations (Stoodley 2010).

¹⁹² Philpott 1991; Cooke 1998, 250.

part of the period, while actually appearing to *increase* in the seventh century – both within long-lived cemeteries spanning the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period and in newly founded burial grounds.¹⁹³ However, some of these later examples – such as where the head is missing or there is evidence of pre-mortem trauma – rather than echoing Roman rites, manifest more negative connotations of deviancy and maltreatment, foreshadowing the formal establishment of judicial execution cemeteries in the Late Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁹⁴

Prehistoric and Roman settlement features were drawn upon as foci and boundary markers throughout the period of study in the Hampshire Downs. Particularly noteworthy is the use of linear features, such as the Roman trackways upon which graves at Itchen Farm are aligned, and the prehistoric ditches that appear to delimit Portway East and Shavard's Farm. Are the functions of these linear features changing or essentially remaining the same – that is, are they being appropriated in a functional way to mark out the cemeteries or do they perhaps also continue to demarcate a longstanding boundary between lived spaces or territories? The linear ditch at Portway East certainly appears to have continued to function as a dividing line in the landscape, reinforcing the idea that territorial boundaries remained relatively static and were strongly influenced by prehistoric and Roman patterns of organisation well into the post-Roman period.¹⁹⁵

The 'cheese' country of Wiltshire

Traditionally, Wiltshire has been divided into two main topographical and agrarian zones – upland and vale, or 'chalk' and 'cheese' – a distinction observed from the sixteenth century, when it was considered logical that differences in soil, climate and regimes of agricultural labour could actively shape the character and disposition of the inhabitants of rural England.¹⁹⁶ While this binary view of the physical geography and underlying geology of the county is undoubtedly an oversimplification, and the relationship between landscape and society is never one of simple determinism, it is nevertheless a useful means of conceptualising the profound influence of the natural environment on patterns of rural settlement and the agrarian economy.

Among the *pays* characterised as 'cheese' country are the Cotswolds, Northern Clay Vale and Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt in the north and west of the county (Figure 31). What is immediately apparent from the distribution map is the total absence of known Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites north-west of a line that extends approximately between Trowbridge and Cricklade. The reasons behind this lack of evidence are unclear. It may be partly due to the low frequency of modern development-led archaeological work in areas subject to rigorous planning restrictions, such as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Taphonomic factors are also likely to have played a role, as the preservation and visibility of human remains are poorer in limestone and clay soils than in chalk

¹⁹³ Stoodley 2006, 77.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹⁵ Stoodley 2007a, 158.

¹⁹⁶ Aubrey 1847, 11; Welldon Finn 1967, 61; Bettey 1986, 126; Draper 2006, 4; Slack 2015, 21.

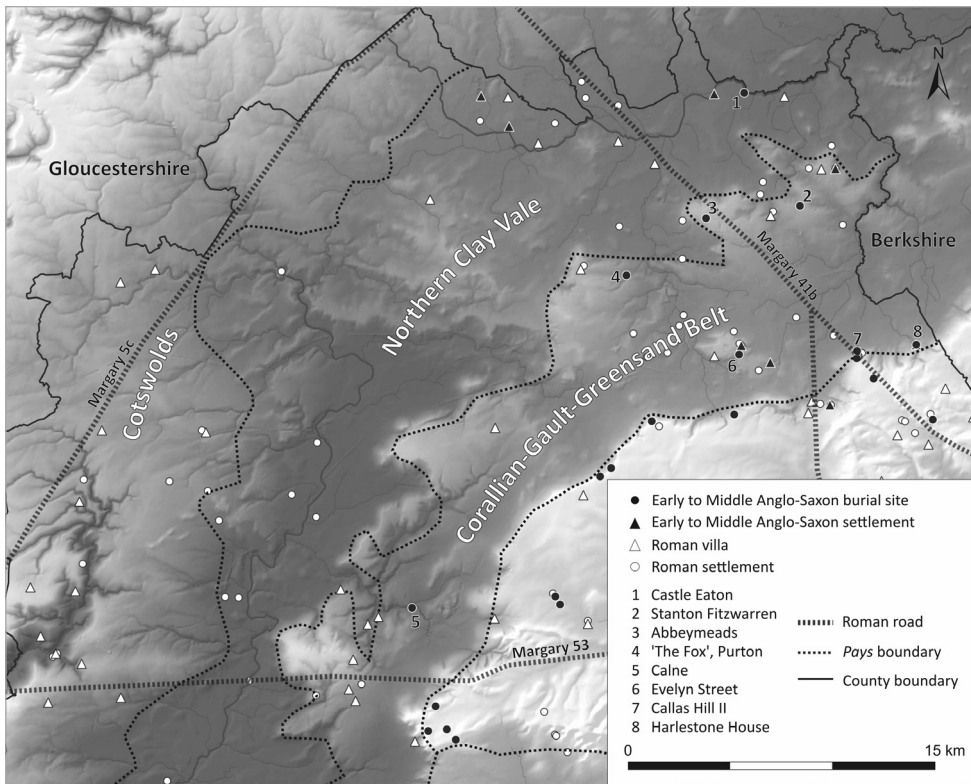


Figure 31. Sites in the 'cheese' country of Wiltshire.

soils. Some burials, particularly unfurnished inhumations, may have been misidentified or incorrectly dated. Here we reach the crux of the matter relevant to this chapter: this imperceptibility of funerary evidence in this zone has previously been noted and suggested to be indicative of British survival.¹⁹⁷ It is also worth repeating that numerous place-names of possible Brittonic origin have been identified in this area. Indeed, onomasts have argued that the high concentration of late Brittonic place-name formations suggests 'a significant Brittonic-speaking presence in an area centred on modern north-west Wiltshire in the seventh century'.¹⁹⁸

Representing an intermediate zone between the limestone and clay *pays* of the north-west corner of the county and the chalk landscapes of the Marlborough Downs and Salisbury Plain to the south and east, the Corallian-Gault-Greensand Belt is an area of diverse geology and terrain. With the exception of a cemetery containing at least ten inhumations of probable late seventh- to early eighth-century date, found in the early twentieth century at 'The Fox', Purton, in a low-lying valley location 7km south-west of Swindon,¹⁹⁹ this *pays* has yielded only isolated sites of one or two burials. A comparatively high concentration of Romano-British

¹⁹⁷ Eagles 1994; 2001.

¹⁹⁸ Coates and Breeze 2000, 115, cited by Draper 2006, 50.

¹⁹⁹ Cunington and Goddard 1912; Grinsell 1957, 98.

settlement evidence has been located in the area, including the small town of *Durocornovium* at Wanborough, which may have served as an administrative centre for a local 'tribal' division or *pagus*.²⁰⁰ There is a noticeable spatial relationship between Roman settlements and isolated early medieval burial sites, both of which tend to be situated on higher ground, avoiding the low-lying clay vale.

Two separate isolated burials have been found on opposite sides of Ermin Street (Margary 41b) – a major route that linked *Corinium* (Cirencester) and *Londinium* via *Calleva Atrebatum* (Silchester) – on the northern escarpment of the Marlborough Downs at Callas Hill I and II (see Chapter 1). Further north, on the edge of the Northern Clay Vale at Abbeymeads, Blunsdon St Andrew, two probable seventh-century burials have been excavated c. 500m west of the same road.²⁰¹ The probability that Ermin Street continued in use in some form through the period of study is reinforced by the place-name Stratton St Margaret (*Stratone* in DB), derived from *stræt tun*, 'farm on the paved (Roman) road',²⁰² midway between Abbeymeads and Callas Hill. It is debatable whether by the sixth or seventh century the *stræt* still had 'Roman' connotations; if so, it is possible that the road was actively appropriated and used in the formation of local identities. It could be suggested that these sites, and others along this stretch of Ermin Street,²⁰³ may in some way represent a continuation of the Roman tradition of roadside burial.²⁰⁴

The placement of the body in a crouched position is one of several rites that have been linked with continuity of 'British' practices, and even seen as representing an ethnic indicator in early medieval funerary contexts.²⁰⁵ One of the two early medieval burials at Abbeymeads was a probable adult male in a crouched position with the head to the north-west and accompanied by a knife. The adult female found in an apparently isolated grave cut into a sunken-featured building at Harlestone House, Bishopstone, was also crouched on her left side, accompanied by a knife and a clay spindle whorl.²⁰⁶ Rather than being indicative of native British identity, the paucity of grave-goods at these sites may merely reflect the dwindling investment in grave-goods during the seventh century.²⁰⁷ The apparent increased frequency of the crouched burial rite in seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in East Yorkshire, too, indicates that this may simply be one facet of the varied funerary rite during this period.²⁰⁸

South Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase

The final area of focus is the chalk downland of southern Wiltshire and north-eastern Dorset. Divided at the county boundary into two separate *pays* for the purposes of this book, the landscapes and burial records of these areas – particularly

²⁰⁰ Anderson and Watcher 2001.

²⁰¹ McSloy *et al.* 2009.

²⁰² Gover *et al.* 1939, 33.

²⁰³ See Chapter 1, p. 51.

²⁰⁴ Philpott 1991.

²⁰⁵ Faulk 1977, 9.

²⁰⁶ King and Bethell 2011.

²⁰⁷ Geake 1997.

²⁰⁸ Lucy 2000, 80, 172.

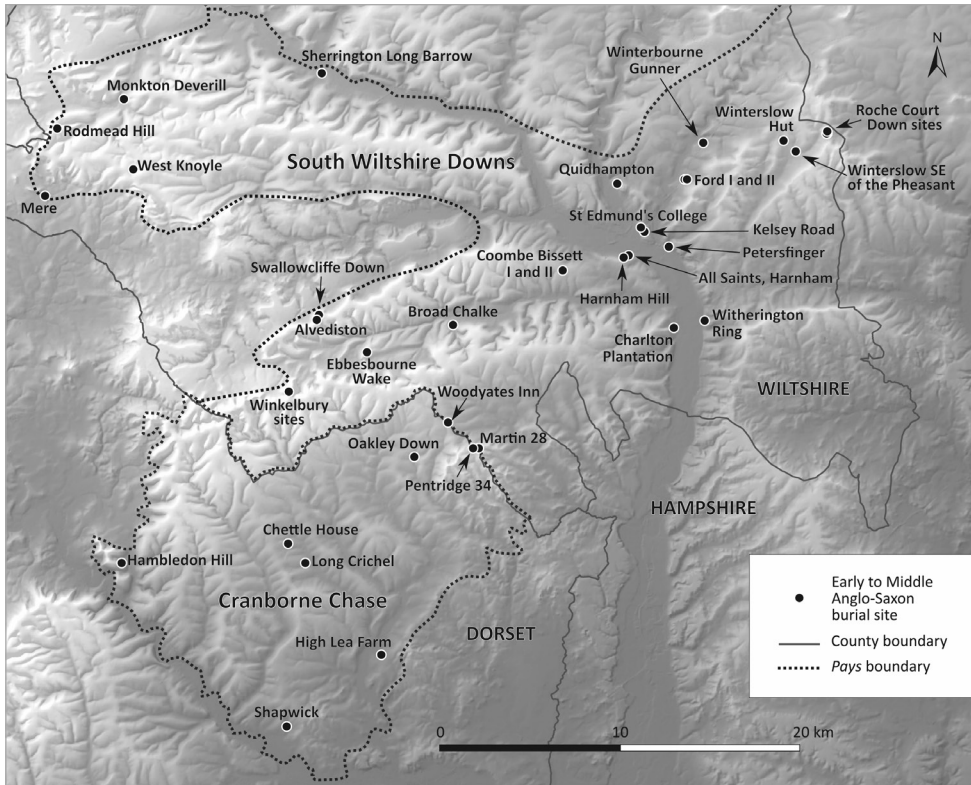


Figure 32. Sites in the South Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase *pays*.

west of the Avon – are nevertheless appreciably connected and comparable (Figure 32). In Wiltshire, the downland is dissected by the alluvial valleys of the Bourne, Nadder, Ebble, Wylde and Salisbury Avon rivers, which converge between the parishes of Alderbury and Downton. This creates fertile zones of alluvium and gravels between the undulating chalk ridges, and the landscape has been subject to more intensive arable cultivation in the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods than Salisbury Plain, resulting in fewer 'relict' landscape features. Romano-British settlements and villas are concentrated to the east of Salisbury, particularly on ridges to the east of the Bourne and along the River Dun.

The South Wiltshire Downs *pays* has revealed the most extensive evidence for Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial in Wiltshire, contributing thirty-two sites, though fewer than the Hampshire Downs, which yielded a total of forty sites. The balance here is slightly more towards isolated burials than community cemeteries, with the latter largely confined to the Avon valley around Salisbury. The early and rapid spread of burial customs characterised as 'Anglo-Saxon' – which do not necessarily exclude certain elements imbued with a sense of the Roman inheritance – has been acknowledged in the Salisbury Avon valley area, which can be seen as a well-connected melting pot of mutual influences, cultural exchange and emulation. A transition from the valley-based community cemeteries of the late fifth and sixth centuries (predominantly in the east) towards isolated high-status burials

and smaller cemeteries on higher ground in the seventh and early eighth centuries (especially in the west) is evident, though burial locations and rites in the Early Anglo-Saxon period are typified by a perceptible degree of continuity and stasis.

Representative of this earlier phase, on opposite sides of the Avon and of the city of Salisbury itself are the cemeteries of Harnham Hill and Petersfinger, which are comparable in size and date (late fifth- or early sixth- to seventh-century). At Harnham Hill, a few hundred metres south-west of the Avon, seventy-three regularly arranged and predominantly east-west inhumations were excavated by Akerman in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁰⁹ Roman-style jewellery including finger-rings and bracelets accompanied several of the burials.²¹⁰ Flints were also found to have been placed on top of the graves. The field in which this cemetery was located was known as 'Low Field', said to be derived from *hlaew* owing to the presence of possible barrows,²¹¹ although no such features have been detected. At Petersfinger, 800m east of the confluence of the Avon and the Bourne, meanwhile, a field cemetery of seventy or seventy-one inhumations in sixty-three or sixty-four graves, perhaps originally two adjacent cemeteries serving different communities, was excavated in 1948 and 1951.²¹² Approximately 5km further downstream, the pair of funerary sites on opposite sides of the valley at Charlton Plantation and Witherington Ring, discussed in the previous chapter, are in similar topographic positions.

The funerary landscape of the western part of this *pays* is palpably different and distinctive, and has much in common with the Dorset Cranborne Chase group, both possessing a combination of apparently isolated burials and small cemeteries of sparsely furnished burials, associated with earlier barrows in many cases, all dating from the sixth to late seventh centuries. The complex, elevated mortuary setting of the Ebble-Nadder ridge and the parallel ridge to the south – which includes such sites as Swallowcliffe and Winkelbury – has already been explored in the previous chapter. Bruce Eagles has argued that the absence of pre-seventh-century finds from the western Ebble valley implies that this area remained in 'British' hands until that time.²¹³ Further beyond this area towards Somerset, on the Wylde-Nadder ridge, is a line of sites on the ostensible western edge of Anglo-Saxon influence, which all indeed appear to date from the seventh century. One such site, mentioned in the previous chapter, is the cemetery at Monkton Deverill, which, with its stone-lined graves and paucity of finds, exhibits characteristics of sub-Roman cemeteries in western Wessex. A few kilometres to the south-west of Monkton Deverill, on the broad, flat summit of Rodmead Hill, Maiden Bradley, at 228m aOD, a broadly contemporary isolated weapon burial was found within a saucer barrow in 1807. The extended inhumation was accompanied by a wood-bound bronze bowl, a seventh-century type SB5-b 'sugar-loaf' shield boss, a sword, two knives and two spearheads.²¹⁴ The finds date the burial to the middle part of the seventh

²⁰⁹ Akerman 1853a; 1853b. Five further graves were found post-excavation.

²¹⁰ Eagles 2001, 218.

²¹¹ Jackson 1854, 198.

²¹² Leeds and Shortt 1953; Draper 2006, 147.

²¹³ Eagles 2001, 213.

²¹⁴ Hoare 1812, 46–7, Plate IV; Hines and Bayliss 2013, 159–60, 334.

century. The monument was one of two saucer barrows on the hill, situated 120m west of a prehistoric sub-oval enclosure.²¹⁵

The third point in a triangle of sites, together with Rodmead Hill and the cemetery at Monkton Deverill, is marked by West Knoyle. Here, a bowl barrow excavated by Hoare and Cunnington in 1807 was found to contain the inhumation of a 'robust man', also with a 'sugar-loaf' shield boss, spearhead and knife.²¹⁶ The barrow, which lay at 205m aOD on a north-east-facing slope leading down to a shallow coombe, was the smaller of two adjacent mounds, and Grinsell suggested that it might be of primary early medieval construction.²¹⁷ Hoare described the shield boss as 'exactly similar to the one before described on Rodmead down', and stated that 'the articles found in this barrow, as well as the mode of interment, mark it to be of the same era as the one at Rodmead'. Furthermore, at both of these sites the barrow selected for intrusive interment was one of a pair. A ridgeway linked the two sites, alongside which, on Charnage Down, lay a later prehistoric or Roman enclosure²¹⁸ similar in morphology to the enclosure on Rodmead Hill.

Cranborne Chase was highly significant in the development of the discipline of archaeology, owing to the work of local estate owner Augustus Henry Lane-Fox Pitt Rivers in the late nineteenth century, and its abundance of well-preserved remains attracted the attention of antiquarians and early archaeologists.²¹⁹ Topographically, this *pays* occupies a chalk plateau, in areas capped by clays and gravels, which dips gently towards the south. Its name is derived from its status as a royal hunting estate, which was granted legal protection as grazing land for deer in the early thirteenth century, although the origins of the Inner Chase may lie in the Late Anglo-Saxon period.²²⁰ The earliest known documentary reference to the Bokerley earthworks appears in the bounds of Martin, Wiltshire, in a charter dated AD 944 × 946: *ende lang dich to wideyate*, 'along the ditch to Woodyates'.²²¹ *Bokedic* first appears in assize rolls dating from 1280, and may derive from *bucc*, 'male deer', possibly an allusion to the hunting of deer on the Chase or to the thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century Blagdon deer park, the boundary of which was partly delineated by the earthworks.²²²

As mentioned in Chapter 1, three instances of secondary interments in barrows have been found along the line of Bokerley Dyke: the female burial within a long barrow at Woodyates Inn, and two weapon burials in round barrows Pentridge 34 and Martin 28, which were also adjacent to linear features Grim's Ditch and Martin 80A (Figure 33). The place-name Martin derives from (*ge*)*mære tun* 'farm at the boundary';²²³ while Woodyates is recorded in ninth- and tenth-century charter bounds as *Wudegate* and *wideyate* respectively,²²⁴ meaning 'gate in the wood or

²¹⁵ Wiltshire and Swindon HER ST83NW645.

²¹⁶ Hoare 1812, 48.

²¹⁷ Grinsell 1957, 119.

²¹⁸ Wiltshire and Swindon ST83SW625.

²¹⁹ Barrett *et al.* 1991, 8.

²²⁰ Bowen 1990, 1.

²²¹ S513; Mills 1980, 236.

²²² Mills 1980, 235–6; Bowen 1990, 15.

²²³ Gover *et al.* 1939, 402.

²²⁴ S342; S513.



Figure 33. Bokerley Dyke with Woodyates, Pentridge 34 and Martin 28.

wooded area' – perhaps a reference to Bokerley Gap.²²⁵ Displaying affinities with the Woodyates Inn burial is another isolated female burial within a bowl barrow which forms part of the extensive barrow cemetery on Oakley Down, excavated by Cunnington and Hoare in the early nineteenth century.²²⁶ The barrow is located 2.6km south-west of Bokerley Junction along the Ackling Dyke Roman road, by which the northern edge of the barrow was truncated. The intrusive extended skeleton of an adult female, orientated north-east–south-west and accompanied by numerous glass and amber beads and a gilt bronze brooch, was found at a depth of c. 0.65m, as was a primary crouched male inhumation. The female burial was accompanied by large number of glass and amber beads, a button brooch and a thin iron ring, all fairly unambiguously 'Anglo-Saxon' in style and probably sixth-century.

Close to the south-western terminus of the Dorset Cursus, the excavation of two round barrows, denominated Long Crichel 5 and 7 by Grinsell and Long Crichel 19 and 20 by the RCHME, was carried out in 1959–60 in advance of deep ploughing.²²⁷ The two barrows, now barely perceptible, lay 170m apart on the gentle south-facing

²²⁵ Mills 1980, 272.

²²⁶ This barrow is also known as RCHME Wimborne St Giles 120 (Bowen 1990, Fig. 1) or Grinsell's (1959, 143) Wimborne St Giles 1.

²²⁷ Grinsell 1959, 77; Green *et al.* 1982; Bowen 1990, Fig. 1.

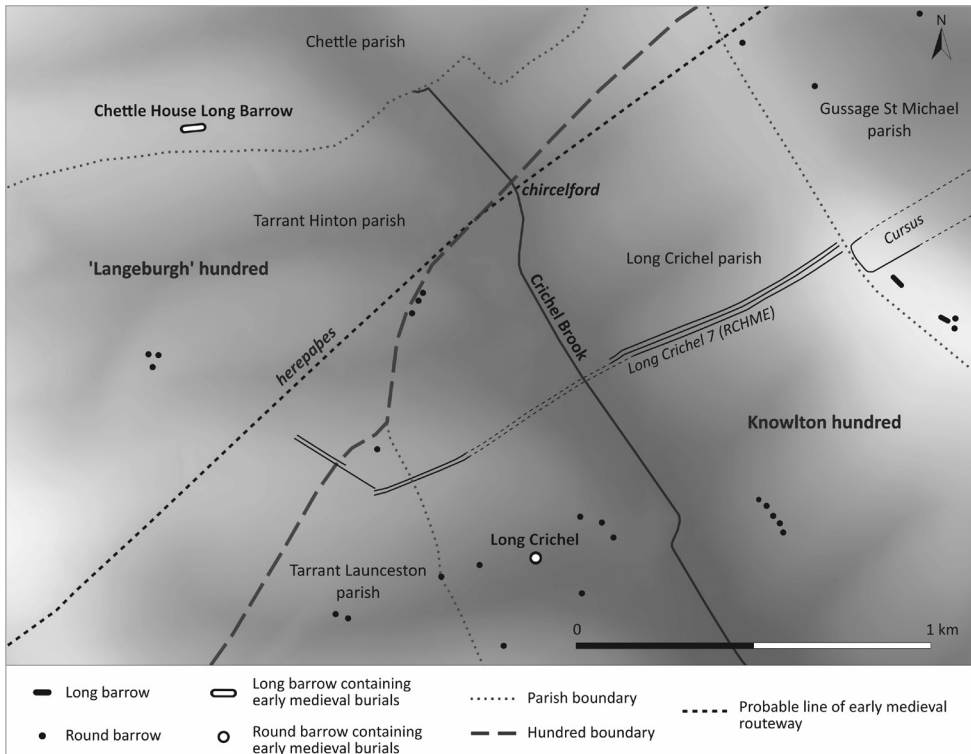


Figure 34. Long Cichel, Dorset (after Bowen 1990, Area Plan 2).

slope of a spur of Launceston Down, overlooking a combe that inclines towards the Cichel Brook, a winterbourne. Three inhumations, thought to date from the seventh century AD, were found in the top of the easternmost barrow, Grinsell's Long Cichel 7 or RCHME's Long Cichel 20 (Figure 34). The barrow was situated in Long Cichel parish, which was part of Knowlton hundred, and was located 270m east of the boundary with Tarrant Launceston parish and 'Langeburgh' hundred. Just over a kilometre to the north-east, on Thickthorn Down, lies the extant south-western terminal bank of the Dorset Cursus. Earthworks of a multiple dyke, designated RCHME Long Cichel Linear 7, project in a south-westerly direction from this terminus, passing the barrow c. 350m to its north.²²⁸ This dyke, in conjunction with the Cursus, is thought to have represented a formidable land division cutting across the grain of the country during the Neolithic.

Originating as an Early Bronze Age turf-built bell barrow, this monument was the intermittent focus of funerary ritual over at least two millennia.²²⁹ The final stage in the life-history of the funerary monument is represented by the interment of three extended burials, heads to the south-west (on the same orientation as Long Cichel Linear 7), in shallow parallel graves at the top of the mound. These

²²⁸ Bowen 1990, 49.

²²⁹ Green *et al.* 1982, 44, 53.

inhumations had disturbed some of the earlier cremation burials. In Grave 11, a young adult male was accompanied by the only finds: a bronze buckle, an iron buckle plate, an iron awl and an iron knife. A child in Grave 10, and the disturbed and fragmentary burial in Grave 12 of a probable male in a flint-lined pit, were both unaccompanied. Some skeletal remains of other individuals were also recovered from the graves.²³⁰ Flint packing or lining, similar to that found in graves at Winterbourne Gunner, Wiltshire, was found in Graves 10 and 11.²³¹ The heads of these individuals were both supported by small 'pillows' of chalk rubble, resonant of the treatment of Grave 1 at Portway East, Hampshire, where support was provided by a flint nodule.²³² A seventh-century date was suggested for this last phase of burial in the barrow on the basis of the iron knife and the simple utilitarian nature and general paucity of grave-goods.

An additional possible pair of early medieval burials within a barrow, not included in the dataset owing to a lack of dating evidence, was found on the crest of the ridge between Handley Down and Bottlebush Down, 150m west of Ackling Dyke. A large barrow, thought to be the one referenced in the bounds of Handley as *Berendes Beorh*,²³³ is flanked by two smaller mounds, and it was in the easterly of these that Cunnington excavated two intrusive extended burials. Hoare recalled that 'one foot and a half from the surface [c. 46cm], he met with two skeletons, which from their position, he well knew were not the original tenants of the mound'.²³⁴ Below these inhumations, as in the largest of the three mounds, he found urned cremations within a stone cist. The barrows lie at the convergence of three parishes (Handley, Wimborne St Giles and Gussage All Saints) and hundreds (Handley, Badbury and 'Alvredesberge'). OE *berende* can be translated as 'fruitful' or 'productive', although Grundy interprets it as a personal name – that is, '*Berend's* barrow'. The location of the barrow in a boundary location would suggest an early medieval date for the two secondary inhumation burials recovered from it, but the absence or loss of any grave-goods and the date of the excavation precludes any firm conclusions.

A further isolated barrow burial that may be seventh-century in date – the most southerly site of the Cranborne Chase group – was found at Shapwick upon the opening of a barrow in the early nineteenth century. The Reverend Charles Woolls recounted that:

while the labourers of Mr. M. Small were occupied in lowering a hill midway between Badbury Camp and Shapwicke, they discovered in a Cist cut in the chalk a Skeleton doubled up, and near it an exceedingly curious bone instrument, which has at one end a small circular hole drilled through it, and at the other extremity eight short teeth like those of a comb. It is four inches long and one inch wide and is part of the rib of a Deer.²³⁵

²³⁰ Ibid., 48.

²³¹ Musty and Stratton 1964.

²³² Cook and Dacre 1985, 23.

²³³ S630; Grundy 1936, 116.

²³⁴ Hoare 1812, 243.

²³⁵ Woolls 1839, 105.

Although the exact location of the ‘hill’ – presumably either a barrow or a natural mound – is not known, from Woolls’ description it seems likely that it was located along the Roman road towards *Durnovaria*, just over a kilometre south-west of Badbury Rings. Grinsell suggested that it was in the vicinity of NGR ST950025,²³⁶ and the probable outline of a ploughed-out ring-ditch, revealed by geophysical survey of the area by the National Trust close to this location, may represent the remains of the barrow mentioned by Woolls. Grinsell commented that the burial was probably ‘Saxon’, while the bone comb and crouched inhumation within a stone cist point to a seventh-century burial of the sub-Roman tradition. Similarly, a group of cist burials accompanied by a spearhead, knife and ‘a lady’s case for nick-nacks’, among other items, was found within a probable bowl barrow at New Barn, Abbotsbury, in Portland and Chesil, west Dorset.²³⁷ The location of the Shapwick burial is also intriguingly close to complex indicators of antecedent settlement. Less than 100m from the probable burial site, the cropmark outline of a fourth-century fort was first identified in 1976, and fieldwalking in 1991 produced fragments of mosaic and painted plaster and pottery dating from the first to fourth centuries AD.²³⁸ The geophysical survey by the National Trust has revealed the extent of the settlement, which is thought to represent *Vindocladia*, mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary as lying on the road between *Durnovaria* and *Sorviodunum* (Old Sarum).²³⁹ A linear feature, dated to the Early to Middle Bronze Age and reused as an Iron Age boundary, provides evidence for the earliest occupation of the site.

The largest group of early medieval burials excavated thus far in Cranborne Chase derives from a cemetery placed within a Neolithic causewayed enclosure on the east-facing slope of Stepleton Spur at Hambledon Hill. The cemetery population here is suggestive of an extended family group, including relatively elderly individuals, and there is no evidence that the individuals were involved in any violent skirmishes or struggles, which are suggested by Eagles to account for other ‘Anglo-Saxon’ finds in hillforts in Dorset.²⁴⁰ Graves 1–11 formed the main group, in an 18m-long north–south row of roughly east–west-orientated graves with the heads to the west, on and perpendicular to the inner outwork bank. Grave 12, an outlier located 16m south-west of the main group on the clay-with-flints, comprised a contemporary double burial of two adult females (one probably in her late teens or early twenties and another in her thirties). It must be assumed that the deaths of these two women occurred sufficiently close to each other to permit their interment at the same time, and the ages are suggestive of a mother–daughter or sibling relationship.²⁴¹ Grave 10 was empty, but may have contained an infant or juvenile, as immature skeletal preservation was poor and there was extensive plough damage.

The row of graves extended away from the parish boundary between Hanford and Iwerne Courtney, which follows the top of the spur; the closest – Grave 1 – lay just 10m from the boundary, while Grave 12 – the double burial – was the furthest

²³⁶ Grinsell 1984, 50.

²³⁷ Penny 1877; Grinsell 1959, 85.

²³⁸ Papworth pers. comm. 2013.

²³⁹ Putnam 2007, 76.

²⁴⁰ Eagles 1994, 27; Mercer and Healy 2008, 521.

²⁴¹ Stoodley 2002, 115.

from the boundary at a distance of 37m. Graves 1–5 (closest to the boundary) were male, of which Grave 5 was the largest and deepest, and the burials to the south of Grave 5 were all female or sub-adult. While the close relationship between the cemetery and the boundary does not appear to be fortuitous, it is possible that the locations of both the cemetery and the boundary were influenced purely by the topography, following the ridge-top of Stepleton Spur. The peripheral location of the double burial is interesting; it is fairly common for such burials to differ in some way from others in the cemetery,²⁴² and a double burial in Grave 2/2A at Portway East, Hampshire, was in a similarly isolated outlying location.²⁴³

Indications of the existence of other relatively large cemeteries of early medieval date in the area are still emerging. Excavations by Bournemouth University have revealed an extensive cemetery of probable post-Roman or early medieval date adjacent to a large Early Bronze Age barrow (denominated HLF 9), part of a wider barrow group at High Lea Farm, Hinton Martell, in the Allen valley in the south-east of the *pays*.²⁴⁴ The cemetery sits at 41m aOD on White Chalk, on the opposite side of the River Allen to the rest of the Cranborne Chase group. It lies 6.5km north-east of Shapwick, the same distance south-east of Long Crichel, and 4km south-west of the henge complex at Knowlton. Although the full extent of the cemetery was not discovered, in 2006 the outlines of over seventy graves were revealed in plan, most of which were aligned broadly east–west and lay to the east and south-east of barrow HLF 9 (Plate 4). Many of the graves to the south-east of the barrow were also imposed on a smaller, probable Middle Bronze Age ring-ditch, although it is doubtful that it was distinguishable in the post-Roman period, as the graves appear to cut it indiscriminately.²⁴⁵ There was no evidence of inter-cutting among the densely packed graves, implying well-established funerary practices and a high degree of organisation and perhaps the marking of graves.

Only two of the graves were excavated, each of which contained an unaccompanied supine extended adult. Part of an oak plank covering one of these burials was radiocarbon dated to the eighth century.²⁴⁶ Unstratified finds of an iron knife and spearhead elsewhere on the site may derive from a burial from close to the surface of the central part of HLF 9, which was destroyed by ploughing. The site also incorporated a late Iron Age–Romano-British settlement complex. High Lea Farm, together with Shapwick, may indicate the presence of a funerary tradition in the lower-lying chalk valleys of the southern periphery of Cranborne Chase that incorporates the appropriation of earlier barrows. The associative grouping around an earlier barrow invites comparisons with Storey's Meadow, Hampshire, although the burials at High Lea Farm are more consistently orientated and appear to lack grave-goods.

Another cemetery comprising at least sixteen burials, some orientated east–west, had been discovered in 1958, c. 4.5km north-east of High Lea Farm and in

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 116–17.

²⁴³ Cook and Dacre 1985.

²⁴⁴ Gale *et al.* 2008.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁴⁶ 1204 ± 24 BP (cal. AD 723–740) (J. Gale pers. comm. 2013).



Plate 4. Aerial view, looking north-west, of some of the probable post-Roman graves at High Lea Farm, Dorset, centred on the small Middle Bronze Age ring-ditch. The main Early Bronze Age barrow is above. The burial radiocarbon dated to the eighth century AD is located to the right of the area under excavation here, beneath the spoil heap (re-covered following excavation in previous seasons). Photo by Aerial-Cam, courtesy of John Gale.

a very similar topographic position, at Knowlton, Woodlands.²⁴⁷ The cemetery is adjacent to the Neolithic–Bronze Age Knowlton Circles complex and Great Barrow. Although undated, the burials were interpreted as middle to Late Anglo-Saxon or later based on their orientation and proximity to Church Henge. Given the date obtained at High Lea Farm, the possibility remains that these too date from the period of study. They are perhaps, although not necessarily, associated with a precursor to the medieval church.

Conclusions

The foregoing analyses undertaken in the second half of this chapter have allowed us to explore in greater depth the funerary evidence within a number of landscape character areas across the region. Examination of this material brings to the fore issues surrounding the (dis)continuity of burial practices and the persistence of place from the late Roman to the early medieval periods. It also challenges us

²⁴⁷ Field 1962.

to reconsider how burials are categorised in 'ethnic' terms. In the west in particular, the similarities between certain burial sites that have been denominated 'Anglo-Saxon' and those apparently representative of 'British' or 'sub-Roman' traditions necessitate a re-evaluation of whether such simplistic and polarising labels can legitimately be applied, a matter to which David Petts has previously drawn attention.²⁴⁸

Broadly speaking, new and innovative funerary rites, usually categorised as 'Anglo-Saxon', appear to have become most rapidly established in central and eastern parts of the study area, notably in the Salisbury Avon valley. This was arguably partly due to a comparatively dense population distribution (apparent from the cemetery sites despite the elusiveness of settlement evidence), which included relatively mobile and outward-looking kin groups, in turn facilitating the transfer and exchange of ideas and material culture.²⁴⁹ Underlying this activity and facilitating this exchange was the natural topography.²⁵⁰ While this 'spread' of Anglo-Saxon material culture and burial practices is no longer necessarily linked to aggressive expansion,²⁵¹ ethnic connotations are often still implicit in many accounts of these distributions. However, the burial practices recognised in Wiltshire, or anywhere else in Wessex, certainly did not become uniformly 'Anglo-Saxon' (whatever we take that to mean) in the fifth, sixth or even seventh centuries.²⁵² It is evident that different communities and social groups forged their own funerary identities, some of which preserved Romano-British traditions while others were more receptive of newly introduced material culture and customs.²⁵³ The multiplicity of burial practices that can be identified in the area of study are likely to represent a fusion of diverse aspects of native and non-native traditions.²⁵⁴

Yet the problems inherent in defining burial sites according to ethnicity and the maintenance of local traditions are highlighted by a number of burial sites that emerge in the seventh century just to the west of the 'core zone' of Wessex. Sites such as the small group of secondary burials within a barrow at Long Crichel, or the cemetery within a causewayed enclosure at Hambledon Hill, comprise graves orientated broadly west-east and often with a stone packing or lining, either unfurnished or containing just a single utilitarian item. These burial sites have in the past been labelled 'Anglo-Saxon', yet their character could equally be described as redolent of 'sub-Roman' cemeteries further west in the region. Granted, it could be argued that term 'Anglo-Saxon' is valid when deployed strictly as a culturally neutral period term. It is also true that these areas were in any case becoming subsumed into the kingdom of Wessex at this time. It is nevertheless difficult to escape the fact that there is little about the burials that unequivocally identifies them as culturally 'Anglo-Saxon'. Indeed, the evidence from Dorset and western Wiltshire raises questions as to whether seventh-century

²⁴⁸ Petts 2009, 218–20.

²⁴⁹ Eagles 2001, 201.

²⁵⁰ Williamson 2013, 234.

²⁵¹ Costen 2011, 22.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵³ Lucy 1998, 105.

²⁵⁴ Draper 2006, 40–3, 49–50.

cemeteries with a high proportion of unfurnished or sparsely furnished burials, similar to those previously defined as 'Final Phase' elsewhere in Wessex (such as Winnall II or Portway West), may have more in common with 'sub-Roman' burial traditions than previously considered.

Monkton Deverill, with its ring-ditch, regular arrangement of graves on a roughly west-east alignment and single recovered grave-good (a knife), has justifiably been described as typically seventh-century Anglo-Saxon.²⁵⁵ Yet the presence of the Roman masonry as grave lining is reminiscent of cist burials of the 'British' tradition, and all of the other identifying characteristics (except, perhaps, the ring-ditch) could just as easily be applied to 'sub-Roman' sites. 'Field cemeteries' of this latter type, also usually ascribed a seventh-century date, are common in western Wessex, with a notable concentration in the Isle of Purbeck. Examples here include Ulwell, discussed in the previous chapter, and Worth Matravers,²⁵⁶ together with a further five sites that are insecurely dated but seem to belong to this 'sub-Roman' tradition: extended inhumations, aligned east-west, sometimes in cist graves and generally unaccompanied.²⁵⁷ Despite the fact that there was no single, homogeneous 'British' burial rite during the fifth to eighth centuries, and unaccompanied burials are inherently problematic to interpret and categorise, unfurnished or sparsely furnished cemeteries of west-east graves are indeed typically attributed to the 'indigenous' post-Roman population, particularly in the west.²⁵⁸

It is interesting, then, that in addition to these cemeteries many of the broadly contemporary 'richly' furnished isolated barrow burials – such as Roundway Hill 7, Swallowcliffe Down, Rodmead Hill and West Knoyle in Wiltshire, and Woodyates Inn in Dorset – are also located on the edge of this western zone, in what is considered to have been the periphery of West Saxon political influence and 'Anglo-Saxon' cultural influence up until the seventh century. Several burials of this type lie within an area, south of the Wylde and in Cranborne Chase, in which numerous place-names of Brittonic derivation can be identified, and are viewed by Eagles as indicative of Anglo-Saxon 'intrusion into new territory'.²⁵⁹

Across into Somerset, too, on the opposite side of the Frome valley to the Wiltshire sites, Buckland Dinham is another example of particular interest. Here, a female grave with glass, amethyst and cowrie shell beads was found to be associated with a long barrow and a possible round barrow. Further to the north-west, at Camerton, an extensive cemetery of c. 114 individuals in 109 east-west graves was excavated by the same local archaeologist, the Reverend Prior Ethelbert Horne, in the 1920s and 1930s.²⁶⁰ Approximately half of the burials were accompanied, and Horne considered the cemetery to be 'Anglo-Saxon' on the basis of the grave-goods. Among twenty-nine male burials, two had spearheads and one a dagger or possible seax; knives were also found with a number of the male graves. Beads

²⁵⁵ Rawlings 1995, 35–6.

²⁵⁶ Ladle 2012.

²⁵⁷ These undated sites are Ballard Down I, Swanage Bay and Belle View Road, all in Swanage (Warne 1866, 72–3; Cherryson 2005b, 41–2); Smedmore Hill in Steeple (Farrar 1959); and Church Knowle (RCHME 1970b, 596). Cf. Turner 2006, 134–5.

²⁵⁸ Draper 2006, 49; Petts 2004; 2009.

²⁵⁹ Eagles 2001, 223; cf. Draper 2006, 42–3.

²⁶⁰ Horne 1933, 42–6.

accompanied four of the thirteen female graves and five of the thirty-four children. Two gold bracteates were also found among destroyed graves to the east of the excavated area. Rahtz, however, identified Camerton as 'sub-Roman', including it in his 'sub-Roman secular' category and linking the small community with continued occupation of the nearby Roman town beside the Fosse Way.²⁶¹ Recently obtained radiocarbon dates from three graves fall within the later seventh or early eighth centuries.²⁶² Costen has argued that this community was perhaps partially adopting similar rites and material culture to their near neighbours in Wiltshire, and concedes that the population was probably local but of uncertain identity.²⁶³ Aston *et al.* suggested that isotope analysis be carried out 'to see if these people are local or not'.²⁶⁴ Indeed, isotope analysis of burials found at Hicknoll Slait in Somerset – associated with an iron knife, glass beads and an unstratified 'sugar-loaf' shield boss – produced interesting results that suggested that at least one of the individuals was raised locally.²⁶⁵

In a similar vein, Loveluck has previously proposed that individuals buried in graves on the fringes of 'Germanic' cultural influence in the Peak District might have belonged to a native elite that chose to adopt styles and burial customs in order to ingratiate themselves with, or assimilate into, the new Anglo-Saxon dominant ruling class.²⁶⁶ Regardless of 'ethnic' origins, shifting political and cultural allegiances in this period are likely to have impacted on how communities chose to identify themselves and present their dead. The aspirations of small autochthonous polities and groups of outsiders, and resultant conflict or strategic alliances between them amid competition for land, could all lead to cultural exchange. In this climate, influxes of new ideas and traditions perhaps provoked a hybridisation of practices. Of course, this 'hybridity' has also been recognised within emerging material culture sets, being embodied, for example, in the Quoit Brooch Style and the Saxon Relief Style, which incorporate elements of a late Roman stylistic vocabulary within artistry firmly embedded in the post-imperial 'Germanic' milieu.²⁶⁷

The appropriation of elements of the ancient landscape was another important facet of this dynamic scene. Changing political affiliations may have prompted a reinvigoration of interest in the inherited environment and a florescence of funerary activity which drew on the recent and remote past. It could be suggested that monument reuse reflects the selective incorporation of aspects of Anglo-Saxon identity into a dominant autochthonous culture.²⁶⁸ Influence could equally have gone both ways. It may not have been only locals adopting new customs but incomers exploiting well-known local idioms and motifs to legitimise their authority. High-status barrow burials might, in this context, be regarded as a form of elite emulation of long-standing traditions. The evidence from Dorset in particular supports the idea

²⁶¹ Rahtz 1977, 54.

²⁶² Aston *et al.* 2013.

²⁶³ Costen 2011, 24.

²⁶⁴ Aston *et al.* 2013, 164.

²⁶⁵ Davey 2005, 112–21; Tabor 2008, 173–4; Rippon 2012, 302–3.

²⁶⁶ Loveluck 1995.

²⁶⁷ Inker 2000; 2006; Suzuki 2000.

²⁶⁸ Blair 2005, 26.

that widespread cultural interaction and mutual influence on religious and mortuary practices took place during the period of study.

Of course, the idea that monument appropriation is in itself an innately Anglo-Saxon custom is debatable. Barrow burial is attested elsewhere in early medieval Britain and Ireland,²⁶⁹ and it is likely, as Blair has noted, that Early Anglo-Saxon communities were influenced by their 'insular neighbours' as much as their continental ones.²⁷⁰ Roman antecedents are also plausible; indeed, Overton Hill could be seen as an example of an 'associative' Roman barrow cemetery, purposely placed adjacent to an existing Bronze Age monument. Evidence from both Itchen Abbas and Snell's Corner, discussed earlier in this chapter, indicates multi-period associative reuse. Ronald Hutton has recently drawn attention to the compelling evidence for Romano-British ritual activity at prehistoric ceremonial sites,²⁷¹ while Tim Darvill has suggested that the level of Romano-British interest in long barrows has been 'significantly underestimated'.²⁷² Blair has also noted that 'so much thought has been given to the possible influence of British Christians on the Anglo-Saxons that we have scarcely bothered to ask about the influence of British pagans'.²⁷³ Furthermore, some intriguing evidence is emerging in Dorset and Somerset for a Romano-British tradition of intrusive barrow burial comprising intrusive barrow burials that are either unaccompanied and undated or are associated with non-residual Roman material and have in the past been interpreted as Roman, although some could equally be post-Roman.²⁷⁴ Whatever the case, they further emphasise the fact that monument appropriation in the area of study is not restricted to burials traditionally categorised as Anglo-Saxon. Whether these are examples of a Romano-British tradition of monument appropriation or are post-Roman, they emphasise that we should not overlook localised traditions of funerary barrow reuse.

As Chris Wickham has stated, 'it was the indigenous elements in social development that were the most important; external invaders merely added a cultural colour to internal social changes which were much more deep-seated'.²⁷⁵ By the seventh century, the Wessex landscape can perhaps be characterised as a 'patchwork of separate *regiones*, some at least of which were dominated by Britons, held

²⁶⁹ Charles-Edwards 1976; Driscoll 1998; O'Brien 1999; 2009; Petts 2000; Maldonado 2013; cf. Semple 2013, 51–3.

²⁷⁰ Blair 2005, 54.

²⁷¹ Hutton 2011.

²⁷² Darvill 2004, 227.

²⁷³ Blair 1995, 3.

²⁷⁴ A round barrow adjacent to the Roman road between Bradford Peverell and Dorchester was found to contain an intrusive inhumation accompanied by Samian ware (NMR SY 69 SE 60), while a barrow at Melcombe Horsey contained an intrusive inhumation with Samian ware and a Roman coin (Grinsell 1959, 119; NMR ST 70 SW 56; RCHME 1970b, 175). At Portesham, a bowl barrow denominated Cunnington's Ridgeway 8 contained a superficial intrusive child inhumation in a grave constructed using a Roman roof slab, with a Roman pottery sherd (NMR SY 68 NW 69; RCHME 1970a, 449–50). An intrusive inhumation with a Romano-British penannular brooch was also discovered in a round barrow overlooking Coombe Bottom, Purbeck (NMR SY 97 NE 27). Another possible example is at Tumpy Field, Charmy Down, St Catherine, in the Cotswolds area of north-east Somerset (Grimes 1960, 214–23).

²⁷⁵ Wickham 2010, 204.

together by the overall supremacy of an English redistributive chieftaincy'.²⁷⁶ The territorial systems that developed during this time and throughout the period of study, and the society which emerged against this background, are the focus of the next chapter.

²⁷⁶ Woolf 2007, 128.

Land Use, Territoriality and Social Change

The previous chapter explored the variations in the burial customs of fifth- to ninth-century Wessex, which are resonant not merely of contrasting embodiments of cultural or ethnic identity but of different modes of social and political interaction. Distinct funerary idioms are identifiable from *pays* to *pays* and from county to county, and are diachronically mutable rather than static. Such trends must surely have been influenced to a significant degree by a dynamic and turbulent climate of emerging territories, shifting boundaries and rising social stratification. Beyond a simple cultural frontier between West Saxons and Britons, changing political configurations are potentially distinguishable at a range of scales, including but not limited to the formation and consolidation of a number of smaller polities and their ultimate assimilation into an expanding Wessex. By the mid-seventh century, the West Saxon kingdom is likely to have incorporated an assortment of sub-kingdoms under the overlordship of the king.

This chapter first asks what form early territorial entities may have taken, from the level of the estate to the more extensive 'early folk territory', and introduces some of the proposed models for their development. This leads us on to explore and re-evaluate the relationship between Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites and the boundaries of ecclesiastical parishes and hundreds. One benefit of a close regional and sub-regional scale of approach is that it can offer us an insight into broader societal and territorial changes. Examining the character and positioning of burial sites in relation to landscape character areas, boundaries and communication routes allows us to contextualise changes in agrarian practices and systems of land holding, especially from around the beginning of the Middle Anglo-Saxon period. The emergence of the phenomenon of isolated high-status burial – of course most notably exemplified by the standout examples of barrow burials accompanied by enigmatic prestige assemblages – is of particular note in this context, and warrants detailed micro-topographical investigation. Such burials are frequently located close to ecclesiastical parish boundaries on the chalk downland, the configuration of which owes much to the natural topography and the ways in which the land has been worked and farmed over several millennia. It is therefore of particular importance to critically reassess how and when these boundaries may have taken shape, and what function and meaning these seemingly marginal zones might have possessed when the burials were made.

Still, we must not forget that isolated high-status burial was the exception rather than the norm, and that the majority of the population continued to be laid to rest in cemeteries.¹ Correspondingly, we should not regard cemeteries as any less viable as arenas of power. These provided the settings for complex social interactions in

¹ Härke 2001.

which a variety of identities and relations were negotiated and rituals were controlled. While it is not within the scope of this book to examine in depth the social hierarchies or relative positioning of graves internal to cemeteries, the geographical locations of community cemeteries with respect to social and territorial divisions in the landscape is a key concern to be explored. What role, for example, might communal burial sites have played in the negotiation and reinforcement of rights to land and resources? How does their positioning relate to arable and pastoral land use regimes, and what might this reveal about changes in the rural economy from the preceding period and over time?

Reconstructing early medieval territories

The degree to which socio-spatial continuity from Roman to medieval Britain can be discerned is a recurrent point of contention. While some scholars have claimed that it is possible to trace near direct progression from Roman villa estate to medieval manor,² few would disagree that profound shifts in the nature of territorial organisation took place in the immediate post-Roman period, manifested most markedly in the dissolution of the three provinces of Britannia into a mosaic of smaller, more dispersed territories.³ Both Bede and the compilers of a late seventh- or early eighth-century tribute list known as the Tribal Hidage refer to a number of administrative units of wildly variable scale, termed *regiones*. The genesis of these units and the extent to which they may have represented discrete, independent socio-political entities remain quite uncertain. A number of the *regiones* or *provinciae* that can be detected in many of the larger kingdoms of the seventh or eighth centuries may have been in existence by the sixth century, while others seem likely to have been founded later for administrative purposes.⁴ One theory for the emergence of *regiones*, which sees their direct development from the Roman provincial infrastructure of *civitates* and *pagi*, presupposes that the Romano-British territorial system did not weaken to such an extent as to necessitate state formation *de novo* in the Early Anglo-Saxon period.⁵ Moreover, the tendency for early medieval estate centres to be sited close to the river or spring heads upon which villas or significant Roman settlements had formerly focused has been seen as suggestive of a degree of Roman inheritance.⁶ However, while boundary arrangements and nodal places certainly appear to have endured in some areas, there is no credible evidence to indicate that any functioning Romano-British territorial units survived intact.

Place-names regarded as indicative of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon territorial units include those containing the group-naming suffixes *-ingas* (principally in southern and eastern England), *-ware*, *-ge* (chiefly in Kent) and *-sæte/-sætan*,

² E.g. Finberg 1955; Rodwell and Rodwell 1986; Rahtz *et al.* 1992.

³ Cf. Williamson 2013, 21; Gerrard 2013, 208–9.

⁴ Bassett 1989; Yorke 2000, 86; Draper 2006, 114; Rippon 2012, 185.

⁵ Eagles 1989; 2004; Dark 1994; Yorke 2000, 86.

⁶ Yorke 1990, 27.

typically in combination with a personal name or topographical element.⁷ These names vary greatly in terms of chronology and context. The earliest secure reference to a *sæte* settlement is found in a charter dating from the early ninth century,⁸ and those containing a town name – such as the precursors of our county names, *Wilsæte*, *Somersæte* and *Dornsæte* (after Wilton, Somerton and Dorchester respectively) – are likely to have been coined from the eighth century onwards for the purposes of taxation and administration following the consolidation of West Saxon control.⁹ The more common *-ingas* and *-inga-* names may indicate a loose form of group affiliation defined by geographical area. These are formed on a variety of elements, some of which appear to derive from a personal name, traditionally thought to be that of a founder or pioneer leader of a kin group and to have connotations of dominance and subjugation (i.e. people ‘belonging’ to a particular leader).¹⁰ A number of probable early units of this type are recognisable in Wiltshire, notably the *Canningas* of All/Bishops Cannings, the *Collingas* of Collingbourne Ducis/Kingston and the *Manningas* of Manningford Abbots/Bohun/Bruce.¹¹

In western Wessex, another category of place-name that may be identifiable with the central places of early territorial units (often more than one per territory) combines a Brittonic river-name with the suffix *-tūn* (e.g. Bruton, Camerton, Cullompton).¹² While many such places were unhidated estates, suggesting that they had been in royal possession from an early date, Costen has cautioned against the speculative back-projection of this organisation earlier than the seventh century.¹³

Early kin-based social units or ‘early folk territories’ such as these, rooted in common identity rather than as formalised units of private ownership or land exploitation, are thought to have covered an relatively extensive area of perhaps several hundred square kilometres.¹⁴ Alan Everitt’s ‘river and wold’ model of early territorial organisation emphasised the impact of topography, pedology and water supply on early settlement and land-use patterns, envisaging ‘nested’ territories that developed organically within drainage basins and river valleys.¹⁵ Waterways represented a common resource, unifying valleys as natural units within which social territories were based and group identities were formed. Logically, too, the boundaries between such territories typically followed the upland watersheds between valleys. Watersheds were long perceived as frontiers and delimiters of community identity, to the extent that they are known to have corresponded with ‘marriage horizons’ as late as the post-medieval period.¹⁶

⁷ Yorke 2000, 84–5.

⁸ Baker 2017, 433.

⁹ Yorke 2000, 84.

¹⁰ Cf. Dodgson 1966; Hines 1995, 82.

¹¹ Draper 2006, 57; Gover *et al.* 1939, 250, 320, 342.

¹² Rippon 2012, 72, 171–3.

¹³ Costen 2011, 64–5.

¹⁴ Rippon 2012, 151, 188.

¹⁵ Everitt 1977; 1986; cf. Phythian-Adams 1987; Fox 1989; Semple 2008; Williamson 2013, 55–6; Mason and Williamson 2017.

¹⁶ Phythian-Adams 1987, 38; Williamson 2013, 80.

The extensive early territories thus described can be seen as precursors to the so-called 'great estates' that began to take shape from the seventh century.¹⁷ These estates, too, were often defined by topographic elements such as watersheds, with their core area (the 'inland') focused on river valleys, and incorporated areas of specialised land use (e.g. woodland, wetland and upland summer pasture) and economic functions (e.g. cheese production or sheep rearing).¹⁸ Great estates may also in some cases have been coterminous with the *parochiae* of minster churches.¹⁹ These territories in turn arguably began to fragment as kings granted land in perpetuity to the church and to ecclesiastical, and latterly secular, noble families through *bocland*, based on the Roman concept of *ius perpetuum*. This process of fission ultimately resulted in the multitude of manorial units and parishes that were in existence by the time of Domesday, and the consolidation of a parochial pattern that has remained largely unchanged since around the thirteenth century.²⁰

By the Late Anglo-Saxon period Wessex was divided into shires and, at a smaller scale, hundreds, each with designated public assembly places providing a formal context for civil and judicial administration and the mediation of disputes, as well as a forum for the gathering and exchange of produce and livestock.²¹ Indeed, communal activity related to assembly is likely to have been entirely crucial in building and maintaining group identity in Anglo-Saxon England.²² Despite the fact that hundreds are not explicitly mentioned until the tenth century, a significant body of toponymic as well as topographic and archaeological evidence suggests that many of their postulated meeting places had much earlier roots. Hundred names that reference possible early social groups in combination with prominent landmarks, such as Armingford, 'the ford of the *Earningas*' (Cambridgeshire) and Hurstingstone, 'the stone of the *Hyrstingas* or people of the wooded hill' (Huntingdonshire), are suggested by Audrey Meaney to be potentially indicative of 'original' assembly sites.²³ The hundreds recorded in Domesday Book are therefore a logical starting point for the reconstruction of an early or at least a Middle Anglo-Saxon territorial framework. Such an approach is, of course, not necessarily wholly reliable, being often inevitably dependent on back-projection from much later sources.²⁴ For parts of Wessex it has proved problematic even to reconstruct the Domesday hundreds. The greatest obstacles have been encountered with respect to Wiltshire: with the exception of *Wrderusteselle*, which combines the hundred name *Wrde* (Highworth) with the place-name *Rusteselle* (Lus Hill), the text of Domesday Book does not give hundred headings, and mentions in passing only the hundreds of "Cicementone" (Chedglow) and *Sutelesberg* (Startley).²⁵ Moreover, places are generally not listed in hundred groups, unlike the text of Exon Domesday for the other south-western

¹⁷ Williamson 1993, 92–104; Dyer 2002, 27.

¹⁸ Faith 1997, 16.

¹⁹ Hase 1988; 1994; Pitt 2003.

²⁰ Winchester 1990, 10–11.

²¹ Neilson 1920; Davies and Vierck 1974; Faith 1997, 147; Baker 2014; Banham and Faith 2014, 158–61.

²² Neilson 1920; Woolf 2000, 102–7.

²³ Meaney 1995, 35; cf. Semple 2004.

²⁴ Pantos 2004.

²⁵ Thorn 1989c.

counties.²⁶ The hundreds of Wiltshire can therefore only be reconstructed from the contents of the near-contemporary Geld Rolls. Nevertheless, the evidence is sufficient to allow a reasonably accurate representation of the Domesday hundreds to be drawn (Figure 35).

As with great estates, close correlations between some hundreds and minster *parochiae* can arguably be identified. In Dorset, for example, the hundred of Sherborne is thought to correspond well with the likely *parochia* of its church,²⁷ while close correlations can also be discerned for Whitchurch Canonorum, Gillingham, Cranborne and Puddletown.²⁸ The valley-based and watershed-defined configuration postulated for early folk territories and great estates appears to have persisted to a degree in the hundredal system in many areas of Wessex, as in other parts of England, highlighting the continuing importance of valleys as the 'preferred zones for settlement and communication'.²⁹ Systematic spatial analysis recently conducted by Andrew Lowerre in central eastern England has found a particularly clear association between hundred boundaries and a combination of watersheds, rivers and Roman roads.³⁰ Close-scale GIS interrogation of the East Anglian landscape by Mason and Williamson, too, has further reiterated the convincing link between hundred boundaries and both watersheds and watercourses.³¹ When analysing the topography of reconstructed Domesday hundred boundaries, it is nevertheless important to remember that, strictly speaking, a hundred unit comprised only the sum of *exploited* land and woodland, whereas areas of 'waste' (moor, bog, and other common land) were regarded as being outside the hundred, or the hundred boundary through them was ill-defined.³²

Burials and boundaries

With the advent of a suite of technical and methodological innovations in the field of landscape archaeology in the 1960s and 1970s, allowing the detection of an unprecedented level of detail in the rural landscape, enthusiasm grew for the concept of territorial continuity from later prehistory through to the post-Roman period.³³ Very much part of this continuity paradigm, the view of the territorial landscape of southern England rendered by Desmond Bonney was one of abiding stasis over the *longue durée*. Through Bonney's research, burial data too began to be seen to have direct relevance to the study of settlements and land organisation. Drawing on analyses conducted first in Wiltshire,³⁴ and subsequently in other areas of Wessex,³⁵ Bonney put forward the view that the deep antiquity and

²⁶ Thorn and Thorn 1979.

²⁷ Hall 2000, 41.

²⁸ Turner 2006, 112.

²⁹ McOmish *et al.* 2002, 113; and see Williamson 2013, 86–7.

³⁰ Lowerre 2016.

³¹ Mason and Williamson 2017.

³² Thorn 1989b, 32.

³³ E.g. Fowler 1975; cf. Rippon 2009.

³⁴ Bonney 1966.

³⁵ Bonney 1972; 1976.



Figure 35. Domesday hundred boundaries in Wiltshire.

long-term stability of the pattern of estates and parishes was attested by the frequent positioning of 'pagan Saxon' funerary sites along their boundaries. For both Wiltshire and Hampshire he calculated that over 40 per cent of the 'pagan Saxon burial sites which may be located with accuracy lie on or near ecclesiastical parish boundaries'. These burial sites, he suggested, were intentionally located on marginal land on the peripheries of estates or the territories of settlements, 'well away' from the dwellings themselves in the river valleys.³⁶

Fundamental doubts concerning the validity of Bonney's thesis have since been raised, however, initially by Ann Goodier and Martin Welch and latterly, and perhaps most iconoclastically, by Simon Draper.³⁷ In her national study, Goodier did concur with Bonney in some respects: that the correlation between boundaries and burials was statistically significant, and that the former surely predated the latter. Yet the fact remains that an explicitly causal relationship cannot be established. Nor can the assumed sequence of events be taken for granted. As Draper stressed, the locations of both burials and boundaries are likely to have been independently influenced by other significant factors, namely the presence of prominent landmarks such as routeways and watercourses. Although the same features might have provided the obvious locations for boundaries at an early date too, close correlation and congruity are not proof of continuity.³⁸ Bonney's arguments are further undermined by the fact that much of the body of burial data then available to him was imprecisely dated and few contemporary settlements had yet been 'clearly recognised archaeologically'.³⁹ Hence, many of the premises upon which the Bonney model rested have since proved to be unsubstantiated by the archaeological evidence.

Counter to the notion that the 'pagan' dead were customarily banished to peripheral or liminal locations with respect to the living, it is increasingly recognised that Early Anglo-Saxon communities did in fact frequently site their cemeteries in close proximity to their settlements, suggesting that settlement and burial were not necessarily regarded as 'distinct spatial entities'.⁴⁰ In contrast, conceptually marginal – yet simultaneously accessible and visible – places in the landscape seem to have been favoured from the middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period initially for the interment of individuals considered socially 'deviant' and subsequently, in an emerging judicial context, for the exclusion of executed criminals and other outcasts to the limits of administrative territories.⁴¹ Some of the 'heathen burials' referenced in field-names and boundary clauses and employed by Bonney to supplement his later analyses,⁴² as well as many of the funerary sites included in his original corpus, may belong to these later phases.⁴³

The central tenets of the Bonney thesis and the questions they raised go to the heart of the matter of how early medieval burial sites relate to prehistoric monuments. This is primarily because, of course, many of these funerary sites were secondary

³⁶ Bonney 1966, 27.

³⁷ Goodier 1984; Welch 1985; Draper 2004; 2006, 73–4.

³⁸ Draper 2006, 74.

³⁹ Bonney 1966, 25.

⁴⁰ Reynolds 2002, 186.

⁴¹ Reynolds 2009, 233.

⁴² Bonney 1976.

⁴³ Reynolds 2002, 172–3.

barrow burials. Moreover, we may be able to ascertain something of the relationship between burials, boundaries and linear earthworks or Roman roads from their spatial positioning, something that Bonney also touched upon in his later articles. That both existing funerary monuments and other prehistoric earthworks were used as landmarks for boundaries in the early medieval period is evident from the recurrent allusions to them in charter bounds.⁴⁴ Boundary burial and the deployment of barrows as territorial markers remains a prominent theme in Irish cemetery studies, with renewed interest in recent years in the phenomenon of boundary *ferta*: grave mounds or circular ditched enclosures documented in early Irish law tracts and still perceptible in the landscape.⁴⁵ Recent archaeological work has suggested that *ferta* were in many cases reused prehistoric monuments (alongside the occasional natural hillock imaginatively interpreted as a barrow), and that intrusive interments were inserted into them broadly during the period c. AD 400–700. Often located in prominent topographic positions, close to natural boundaries in the form of watercourses, coastlines or bogs, such monuments were perceived as important ancestral places, to the extent that the practice of secondary burial of key individuals within *ferta* was actively used to legitimise or reinforce claims to land.

As far as our area of study is concerned, what remains imperative is to interrogate why intrusive barrow burials were placed where they were, within monuments and on boundaries. Was the monument itself the chief concern, or was the presence of a boundary or a contemporary routeway a more decisive factor? Is it possible to develop something of a model for the sequence of events? The following sections of this chapter try to answer these questions, commencing with a reassessment of the relationship between burial sites and parish and hundred boundaries in light of the currently available data.

Parish boundaries and burial sites: analysis

In order to attempt to interpret the relationship between ecclesiastical parish boundaries and early medieval burial sites in a meaningful way it is vital to be aware of the patterns in the morphology of these land units in the different *pays* and counties of Wessex. One immediately recognisable feature of the parochial pattern of the study area constitutes the so-called strip parishes: long, narrow territories arranged in roughly parallel formation, perpendicular to the valley bottom. Historically a way of dividing the land so as to afford each estate or individual village holding a mix of topographical zones and land-use types, each of these units would typically incorporate land for grazing on the higher ground, arable on the fertile greensand or gravel soils of the valley slopes, meadow in the vale, and perhaps a share of heath and woodland.⁴⁶ Such an arrangement is com-

⁴⁴ Cf. Semple 2013, 160–5, Appendix 4.

⁴⁵ Seminal work on this subject was conducted by Thomas Charles-Edwards (1976), and the evidence has recently been opened to further scrutiny as part of the ‘Mapping Death’ project (see O’Brien 2009; 2017; O’Brien and Bhreathnach 2011).

⁴⁶ Cf. Rackham 1986, 19–20; Yorke 1995, 75; Bethey 2000, 35; Sewell 2000, 32; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 12.

monly, but not exclusively, found in the chalklands of southern England, notably on the Wessex downland of Wiltshire, Dorset and Berkshire, and on the Chilterns to the north and east. Many parishes and their constituent tithings in central and southern Wiltshire, such as Pewsey, Marden and Wilsford, incorporate portions of downland on Salisbury Plain and fertile land in the lower lying Vale of Pewsey, or run perpendicular to the Avon or the Bourne (Figure 36). Strip parishes can also be discerned on the Hampshire Downs, as in the Upper Itchen and Dever valleys,⁴⁷ and likewise in Somerset at Shapwick/Moorlinch.⁴⁸ In Wessex these units are typically around 500m to 2km in width and from around 2km to 10km in length.

Elsewhere in the study area, parish formations reflect the presence of early royal estate centres holding multiple outlying detached portions, as at Curry Rivel and Somerton, Somerset.⁴⁹ Generally, though, parish morphology and extent varies widely and betrays complex sequences of development, about which it would be unwise to generalise and which are beyond the remit of this discussion.⁵⁰

Wiltshire

Thirty-seven of the ninety-five Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites in Wiltshire – 38.9 per cent – lie within 100m of a parish boundary (Figure 37). This figure is broadly comparable with the results of Bonney's analysis, which found that 42 per cent of sixty-nine sites in Wiltshire lay on or within 500 feet (c. 152m) of a parish boundary.⁵¹ Of those burial sites placed within 100m of a parish boundary, over half (twenty sites, or 54 per cent) were directly associated with barrows, four of which are likely to be of primary early medieval construction (Alvediston, Coombe Bissett I, Ford II and Roundway 3).

Although there is certainly a strong correlation between parish boundaries and burials in Wiltshire, it is important to determine whether other factors may have independently influenced the locations of both the burials and the boundaries. The average parish size for Wiltshire is 6.7 km², compared to 6.9 km² for Dorset and 7.9 km² for Hampshire (and for Somerset, 6 km²).⁵² This comparatively compact average area combined with the long and narrow shape of many of these parishes means that it is more probable that any given point within a parish will be close to a boundary.⁵³ As mentioned above, the relationship between parishes and the topography and hydrology is particularly evident on the downland of southern Wiltshire, where numerous strip parishes extend up the slopes of valleys, terminating at watersheds. Sites such as Alvediston and Coombe Bissett in the South Wiltshire Downs *pays*, for example, are situated atop the ridges that mark these watersheds, and are thus also close to parish boundaries.

⁴⁷ Klingelhöfer 1991, 134.

⁴⁸ Cf. Rippon 2008, 71–2.

⁴⁹ Costen 2011, 68–70.

⁵⁰ Winchester 1990.

⁵¹ Bonney 1966.

⁵² Calculated from attribute data in Southall and Burton 2004.

⁵³ Reynolds 2009, 203.

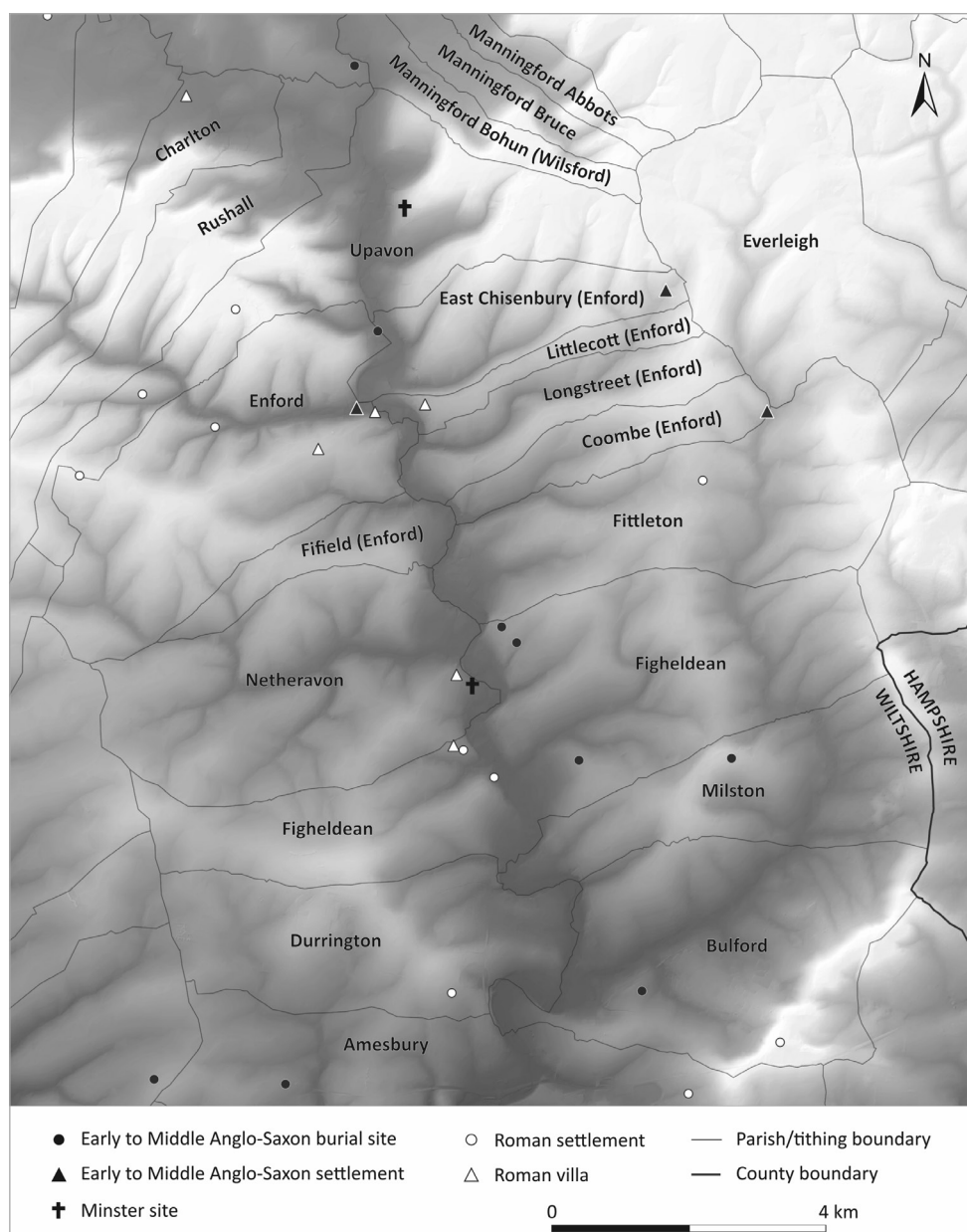


Figure 36. Strip parishes in the Salisbury Avon valley.

Draper has demonstrated that all thirty of the early medieval burial sites in his Wiltshire sample that were within 150m of a parish boundary also lay within 1km of a major routeway.⁵⁴ A kilometre is a considerable distance to be considered an asso-

⁵⁴ Draper 2004, 57.

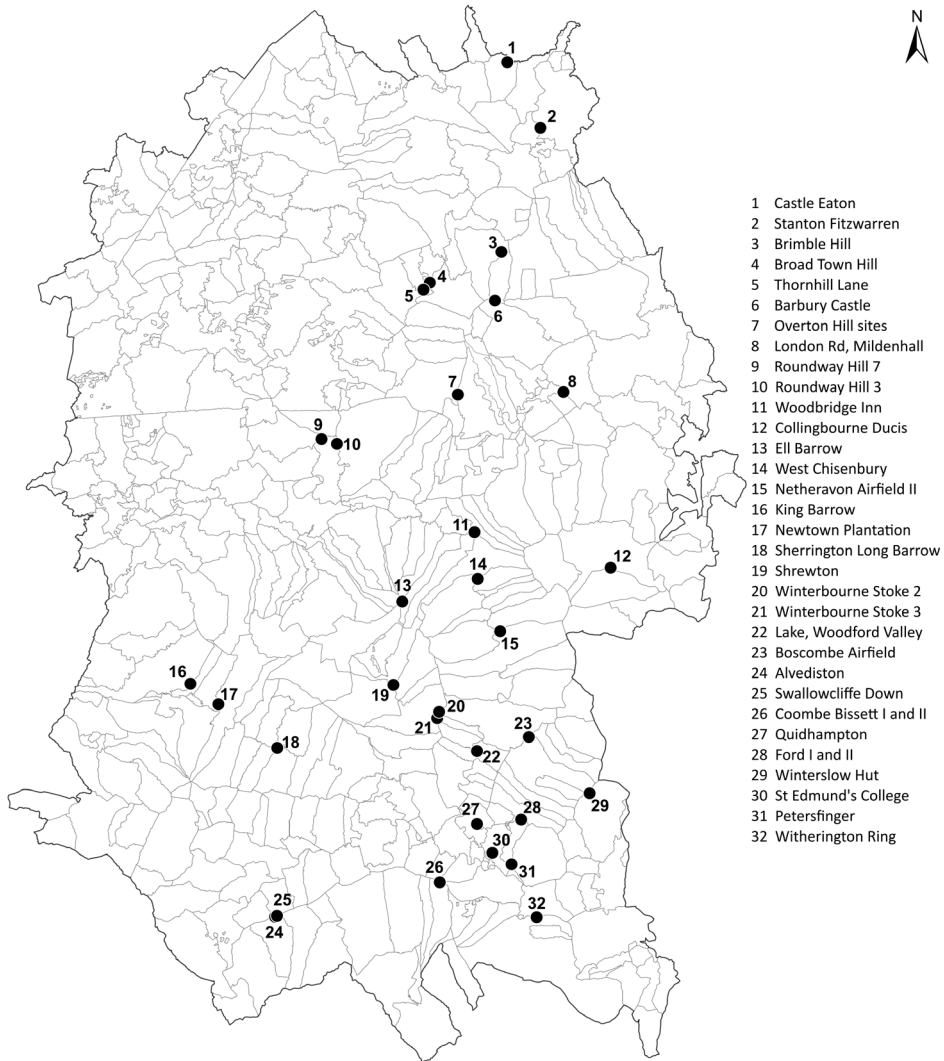


Figure 37. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites within 100m of a parish boundary in Wiltshire.

ciation, and many of the routeways Draper cites are unlikely to be earlier than, or even contemporary with, the burial sites. Yet it must be conceded that the majority of the sites in the Wiltshire dataset that do lie under 100m from a parish boundary are indeed close to Roman roads, *herepaðas* or other earlier or contemporary routes, which either define the boundary itself or are a separate feature of the burial location.

Hampshire

A weaker correlation between Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites and ecclesiastical parish boundaries has been identified in Hampshire: of the seventy-two

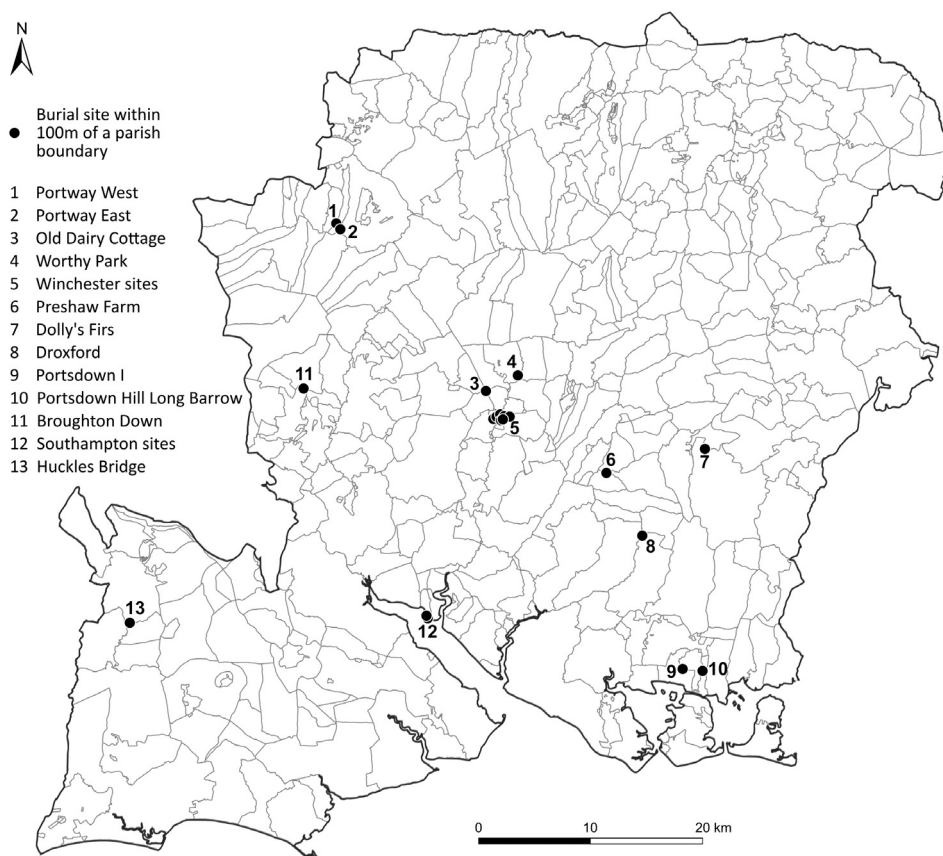


Figure 38. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites within 100m of a parish boundary in Hampshire.

burial sites, only twenty (28 per cent) were found to lie within 100m of a parish boundary (Figure 38). Many of the sites that are located in close proximity to a parish boundary are in Winchester, which was divided into multiple small ecclesiastical parishes. Of the burial sites that do lie within 100m of a parish boundary, only two – just 10 per cent – are directly associated with barrows (Portway West and Portsdown Hill Long Barrow).

Bonney reported that, in Hampshire, 'over forty per cent of the *pagan* Saxon burial sites which may be located with accuracy lie on or near ecclesiastical parish boundaries' (my emphasis).⁵⁵ Although religious affiliation is problematic to discern, arguably nearly all the sites in the Hampshire dataset (with the exception of a few in, for example, *Hamwic* and Winchester associated with possible church structures) can be defined as non-Christian. This study has therefore demonstrated that a smaller proportion of 'pagan' burial sites in Hampshire are on parish boundaries than previously thought.

⁵⁵ Bonney 1972.

Hampshire has the largest average parish size of the four counties, at c. 7.9km². The morphology of its parishes is also perhaps less influenced by the natural topography, hydrology and land-use potential than those of Wiltshire. As a consequence, while these factors still impacted upon burial location, the funerary sites themselves do not necessarily coincide with boundaries. This may be due to the fact that estates in Hampshire underwent more substantial fragmentation, amalgamation and transformation in the Late Anglo-Saxon period. As Thorn has highlighted, while parts of the boundaries of some estates follow topographical and antecedent features, it is 'clear that many boundaries were artificial and circumscribe entities that had been broken away from larger units'.⁵⁶ This is also reflected in the difficulties encountered in 'georeferencing' many of the county's charter bounds: many of the solutions are doubtful, and many estates are unidentifiable, as they incorporate parts of various modern parishes.⁵⁷

Dorset

Of the twenty-three burial sites in the Dorset dataset, eleven (48 per cent) were found to lie on or within 100m of a parish boundary (Figure 39). This is a higher proportion than for Wiltshire or Hampshire. While we should be mindful of the small sample size, there certainly appears to be a strong correlation between burial location and parish boundaries in Dorset.

Three sites – Eggardon Hill, Tolpuddle Ball and Hambledon Hill – lie on or within a few metres of a parish boundary and, at the latter two sites, the boundary seems to have demarcated the edge of the cemetery. Five of the sites that lie within 100m of a parish boundary (45 per cent) are associated with barrows. As in Wiltshire, the narrow, elongated shape of many of the chalkland parishes reflects the need to encompass downland and alluvial valley soils within the same estate, as part of a strategy of combining grazing with arable cultivation.⁵⁸

Somerset

Of the twenty-six Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites in Somerset, only five (19 per cent) were located within 100m of a parish boundary (Figure 40). This represents the lowest proportion of the four counties in the study area, in spite of the fact that Somerset has the smallest average parish area, at 6km². As for Hampshire, problems are posed by the fact that numerous parishes are likely to have once been part of larger royal estates. Buckland Dinham is the only site within 100m of a parish boundary to also be directly associated with a barrow.

Overall, 33.7 per cent of the 216 burial sites in the study area are situated within 100m of an ecclesiastical parish boundary. This figure is slightly lower than those attained by Bonney for Wiltshire and Hampshire and by Goodier nationally. For Hampshire and Somerset the figures are significantly lower than previous studies

⁵⁶ Thorn 1989a, 34.

⁵⁷ Grundy 1921.

⁵⁸ Groube and Bowden 1982, 53.

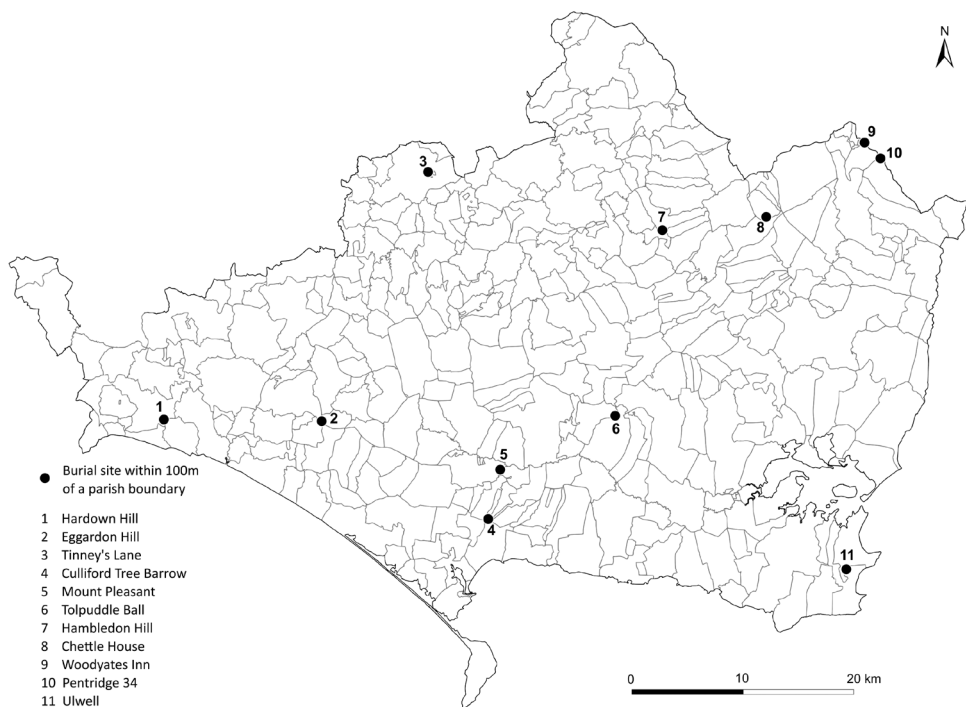


Figure 39. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites within 100m of a parish boundary in Dorset.

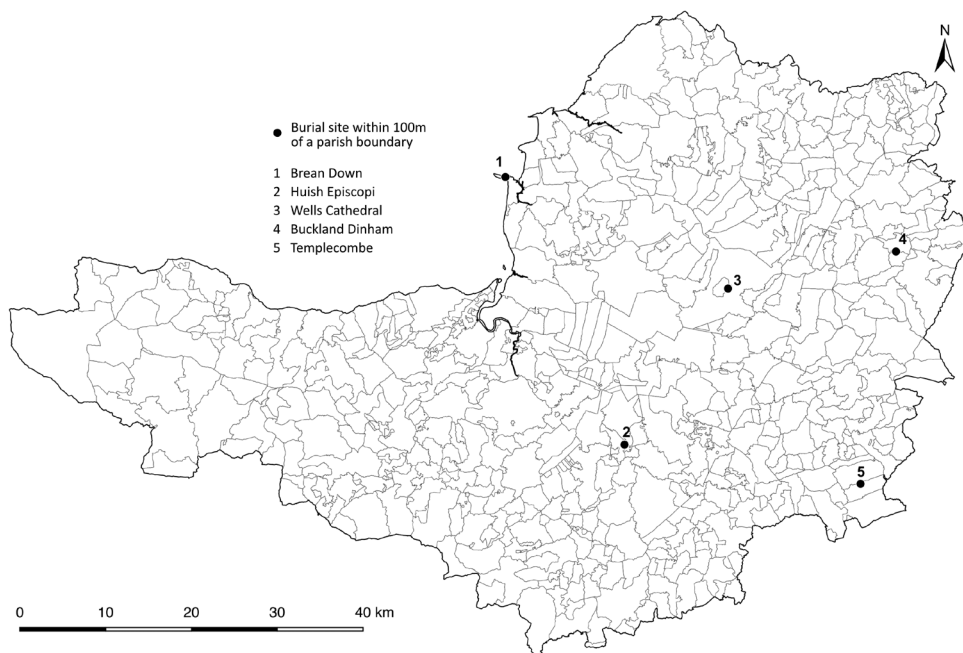


Figure 40. Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites within 100m of a parish boundary in Somerset.

have suggested. While, as Goodier has previously argued, the correlation between burial sites and parish boundaries (at least in Wiltshire and Dorset) is certainly statistically significant,⁵⁹ it is important to move beyond statistical analysis and to scrutinise this relationship, examining other factors that may have influenced burial location.

Of the seventy-three burial sites in the study area that lie within 100m of a parish boundary, twenty-eight (38.4 per cent) are directly associated with an earlier barrow. Conversely, of the sixty-one burial sites that are directly associated with a barrow, twenty-six – or 42.6 per cent – lie within 100m of a parish boundary. This implies that, while a wide variety of burial sites are located near parish boundaries, intrusive barrow burials display an especially strong tendency to be situated on or near such boundaries. The key relationship, then, is between burials and barrows. As prominent markers and mnemonic aids, barrows exerted a significant influence on early medieval mortuary geography, and their relationship with boundaries and routeways warrants further exploration.

Hundred boundaries and burial sites: analysis

The correlation between Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial sites and Domesday hundred boundaries in the study area is considerably weaker than that revealed between burial sites and parish boundaries. This is perhaps unsurprising given their much larger area: Domesday hundreds in Wiltshire, for example, could be up to 20km in diameter. Overall, only twenty-four (11.1 per cent) of the 216 burial sites are situated within 100m of a hundred boundary, while 114 (52.8 per cent) are within 1km.

Of the twenty-four burial sites in the study area that do lie within 100m of a hundred boundary, eleven (45.8 per cent) are directly associated with an earlier barrow. Of the sixty-one burial sites that are directly associated with a barrow, conversely, only ten (16.4 per cent) lie within 100m of a hundred boundary. This indicates that, while intrusive barrow burials occupy a wide variety of locations within Domesday hundreds, there is a comparatively strong tendency for those burial sites that *do* lie close to hundred boundaries to be associated with barrows. For secondary barrow burials on hundred boundaries there is a clear propensity towards the ridges and high ground between valleys – notably, in Wiltshire, at Boscombe Airfield (a bell barrow), Ell Barrow (a long barrow at the convergence of several hundreds) and Winterbourne Stoke III (a bell barrow at the convergence of several hundreds). Beyond their proximity to artificially imposed administrative boundaries and natural topographic frontiers, these barrows (particularly the latter two) were situated at important nexuses in the landscape, the tracks and boundaries leading towards them from different directions being indicative of common land.⁶⁰ They thus became focal points for collective activities that were recurrently emphasised and reiterated through monumentality and commemoration over millennia.

⁵⁹ Goodier 1984.

⁶⁰ Oosthuizen 2013, 25.

Of course, it is not solely contiguity to the *boundaries* of hundreds but also potential proximity to their meeting places, which could equally be located away from the margins of the territory, that is of interest with regard to the siting of early medieval funerary places. Such sites frequently incorporated ancient monuments or distinctive natural topographic elements, from which the hundred often took its name. While there is a significant body of toponymic evidence to potentially link hundred meeting places to earlier pre-Christian cultic activity, burial at acknowledged places of assembly is rarely if occasionally attested.⁶¹

It is not within the scope of this book to systematically analyse the relationship between early medieval burial and assembly – not least because the evidence is elusive – but close exploration of certain potential examples is interesting. One case in point is a bowl barrow known as Culliford Tree Barrow or the ‘Hundred Barrow of Culliford Tree’, situated on a chalk ridge approximately 4km south of Dorchester, in which four probable early medieval intrusive inhumations, one with a necklace of amber and gold beads (now apparently lost), were unearthed in 1858.⁶² The barrow, which lends its name to Cullifordtree hundred and is thus a probable candidate to have been a hundred meeting place, is located 100m north of the South Dorset Ridgeway.⁶³ Although no charter bounds for estates in this area survive to potentially verify that this stretch of the Ridgeway was in use in the early medieval period, it is worthy of note that the recently discovered tenth- or early eleventh-century Viking mass grave on Ridgeway Hill, 3km to the west, was located adjacent to the same route at its junction with the Roman road between Dorchester and Weymouth (Margary 48).⁶⁴ Culliford Tree Barrow also lies 60m east of a parish boundary and about 30m west of another routeway, both of which run perpendicular to the ridge-top and Ridgeway. A large bank barrow lies 300m to the south-east.⁶⁵ The scope for interpretation is, unfortunately, limited by the fact that the Culliford Tree burials cannot be closely dated, but the complexity and connectedness of the site recall other such potential places of early medieval assembly as Roche Court Down, Wiltshire, and Rollright, Oxfordshire.⁶⁶

Pastoralism and social territories

Early medieval territorial units – whether the hundreds formalised in the Late Anglo-Saxon period, or the antecedent *regiones* or early folk territories – were therefore deeply embedded in the natural topography and patterns of landscape character and land use. The fact that the names of some *regiones* reference land-use areas that are considered to have been communal in nature – particularly ‘wastes’ such as moors, open downland or wood pasture – provides support to the idea that the very

⁶¹ Cf. Semple 2013, 90–3.

⁶² Warne 1866, 18–19.

⁶³ Anderson 1934; Mills 1977, 196; Thorn and Thorn 1983.

⁶⁴ Loe *et al.* 2014.

⁶⁵ NMR SY 78 NW 7.

⁶⁶ Semple 2004.

identities of Early Anglo-Saxon social territories were rooted in rights to pasture.⁶⁷ In Wiltshire, for example, are the Domesday hundreds of 'Scipa' (*scypen*, 'shippon or cattle shed') and 'Studfold' (*stód-fald*, 'horse or stud enclosure').⁶⁸ Common land, moreover, often underlay territorial boundaries, affording communities on either side of a notional dividing line a shared resource.⁶⁹ Intercommoning in this way may have not only shaped the identities of individual territories but also facilitated their coalescence into sub-kingdoms.

Past patterns of land management and husbandry have left particularly clear traces on the chalkland landscapes of Wessex. The calcareous grassland which swathes much of the open downland is essentially a man-made habitat, created through woodland clearance during the Neolithic and managed and maintained over millennia.⁷⁰ Chalk bedrock typically gives rise to thin, light and freely draining soils. This was both a blessing and a curse for arable cultivation in pre-industrial societies: while such soils are easily ploughed, their fertility is rapidly depleted when intensively worked. Such was the case on Salisbury Plain, where mineral exhaustion began to have an adverse effect on crop yields from the Iron Age onwards.⁷¹ Grazing, conversely, was a reliable economic activity, which was indispensable for the survival of downland communities. The folding of sheep, in particular, also helped to maintain the fertility of soils and improve the grass.⁷² Of course, land use varied considerably from area to area. There can be little doubt, for example, that arable production continued to intensify markedly in certain areas of Salisbury Plain during the late Roman period, as attested by substantial lynchets and complex irrigation systems at places like Chisenbury Warren, Upavon, Charlton and Compton, on the downland above the Avon valley.⁷³ Yet the need for pasture was always present. A change in identifiable molluscan species on the eastern chalklands of Wessex, for example, attests to a shift from arable to pasture during the Early Anglo-Saxon period.⁷⁴ A climatic downturn, particularly around AD 500, is likely to have further reinforced the importance of grazing, taking precedence over crop growing.⁷⁵

Pollen sequences from western Wessex, meanwhile, suggest that there was 'little significant change' between the fourth and sixth centuries AD, and 'continuity at the end of the Roman period in an essentially pastoral landscape'.⁷⁶ Clearance of woodland on the plateau top of the Mendips had also been undertaken in prehistory, providing extensive open land for grazing, to which stock are likely to have been brought from far beyond the immediate hinterland. The uplands of Quantocks and Exmoor, too, offered pasture for cattle and sheep. The lower-lying moors and marshes could also be grazed, seasonally. Place-name evidence in the

⁶⁷ Oosthuizen 2011b, 164.

⁶⁸ Gover *et al.* 1939, 30, 311; Banham and Faith 2014, 160.

⁶⁹ Everitt 1986, 144–5; Lewis *et al.* 1997, 59; Oosthuizen 2011b, 168.

⁷⁰ French *et al.* 2007; O'Connor 2009.

⁷¹ Groube and Bowden 1982.

⁷² Banham and Faith 2014, 226.

⁷³ Entwistle *et al.* 1994, 9–10; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 100.

⁷⁴ Rippon *et al.* 2015, 135, 139–40, 167.

⁷⁵ Baillie 1999; Oosthuizen 2011a.

⁷⁶ Rippon *et al.* 2006, 49.

form of 'summer names' can be suggestive of such activity: Somerton, from which Somerset derives its name, may allude to the summertime grazing of the surrounding moors.⁷⁷

Routeways and boundaries in the context of community cemeteries

As introduced in Chapter 1, proximity and intervisibility between burial sites and routeways is a prevalent theme in early medieval scholarship,⁷⁸ and in assessing the evidence from Wessex it is important to consider the various categories of route-way potentially present and in use during the period of study. In addition to the network of extant Roman roads, other major routes included droveways, intended to facilitate the seasonal transhumance of livestock (sheep, cattle or swine) between summer and winter pastures. These routes can be traced through a combination of toponymic, topographic and historical testimony. Most notably, the ancient Kentish droveways that ascended and traversed the North Downs to and from *denns* (swine pastures) were meticulously charted by Kenneth Witney and Alan Everitt; and more recently their patterning has been reconsidered and refined through spatial analysis and predictive modelling by Stuart Brookes.⁷⁹ The considerable antiquity of many drove routes is evidenced by their preservation, sunken and fossilised, in relict upland landscapes and by their spatial relationship with recognised prehistoric elements.⁸⁰ Initially, the courses of droveways are likely to have fluctuated somewhat within a broadly defined corridor, as different paths were trodden by travellers as best suited to practicality and purpose.⁸¹ Their lines feasibly became more consistent and formalised in the middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period, however, as land ownership increasingly restricted lateral movement. A *lamba pæth*, 'lambs' path', is mentioned in the tenth-century bounds of East Overton, for example.⁸² Many of the routes recorded as *herepaðas* in middle and Late Anglo-Saxon charter bounds are thought to have originated as long-distance droveways. The often cyclical pattern of such routes, notably on the Marlborough Downs, stands in contrast to the starkly linear configuration of Roman roads.⁸³

The seasonal movement of livestock would have taken place both on a horizontal axis, over long distances to detached areas of grazing, and vertically, between the valley floor and neighbouring uplands. Thus long-distance transhumance routes typically followed the higher ground of ridge-tops and watersheds, whereas shorter-distance droveways led up the sides of valleys, connecting settlements with areas of common pasture. Ultimately, each community might have had a valley-side trackway leading to its own discrete upland pastures or common.⁸⁴ These latter routes provided the 'obvious boundaries for farms, estates and

⁷⁷ ASC 733; Costen 2011, 114.

⁷⁸ See pp. 50–1.

⁷⁹ Witney 1976; Everitt 1986; Brookes 2007a, 60–5; 2007b.

⁸⁰ Hooke 1985, 58; Fowler 1998; 2000b, 256; McOmish *et al.* 2002, 121–3.

⁸¹ Reynolds 1999; Fowler 2000b, 256–7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 216; S449.

⁸³ Brookes 2007b, 145.

⁸⁴ Banham and Faith 2014, 156.

administrative units', contributing to the formation of strip parishes.⁸⁵ Conceivably, then, a sequence of events can be usefully outlined accordingly: routeways, many of which may already have represented boundaries prior to the Early Anglo-Saxon period, naturally came to demarcate estates and began to be formalised and committed to writing during the Middle Anglo-Saxon period. Caution is advised when defining this as continuity, however, as the apparent stability in the location of boundaries does not necessarily signify that they were purposely maintained or managed in the long term.⁸⁶ Furthermore, as the boundaries of these estates are likely to have been delineated and reaffirmed by 'perambulation' or 'riding the bounds', they would naturally have followed a track, path, or at least an accessible route.⁸⁷ In short, it could be argued that routeways were more directly influential on the siting of burials than boundaries.

Fifth- to eighth-century community cemeteries in the study area display a strong tendency to be located adjacent to the shorter, local drove routes leading from the valley bottom up onto the downland. Among others, examples include Worthy Park and Itchen Abbas in Hampshire; Portesham, Long Crichel, Chettle House and High Lea Farm in Dorset; and Barrow Clump and Broad Chalke in Wiltshire. The group of Early Anglo-Saxon intrusive barrow burials at Overton Hill on the Marlborough Downs, for instance, is situated less than 100m from the Ridgeway, a route which links the Kennet valley with an area referred to in the tenth century as *dun landes*, 'downland'.⁸⁸ This route has early origins in a more dispersed, fluctuating form, but was perhaps consolidated into a single track by the late Roman period, and was later followed by the boundary between West Overton and Avebury.⁸⁹ Community cemeteries associated with earlier barrows tend in particular to be sited adjacent to routeways: further examples include Winterbourne Gunner in Wiltshire, and Snell's Corner, Bevis's Grave, Portway West, Breamore and Bargates in Hampshire.

A recently excavated rural cemetery site, Storey's Meadow, at West Meon in Hampshire, provides new and compelling evidence for the appropriation of a Bronze Age round barrow in the context of a community burial ground. The site is located on a gentle south-facing slope overlooking the Meon valley, 250m north of the river, just to the east of a lane that ascends the valley side and truncated on its eastern edge by a main road which also runs northwards. A ring-ditch was initially identified on aerial photographs, and its presence was confirmed by geo-physical survey and trial trenching.⁹⁰ Excavations carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) in 2011, prior to residential development, revealed fifty early medieval inhumation burials in forty-nine graves (including a pregnant female and unborn child) in and around a circular ring-ditch with an internal diameter of 24m, and a mid-sixth- to mid-seventh-century AD cremation burial to the west of the ditch (Figure 41).⁹¹ An Early Bronze Age cremation burial in an

⁸⁵ Draper 2006, 112.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 74; Hamerow 2002, 124.

⁸⁷ Devlin 2007, 46.

⁸⁸ S449; Fowler 2000b, 216.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁹⁰ Roseveare 2008; Smith 2011.

⁹¹ Ford and Falys 2016.

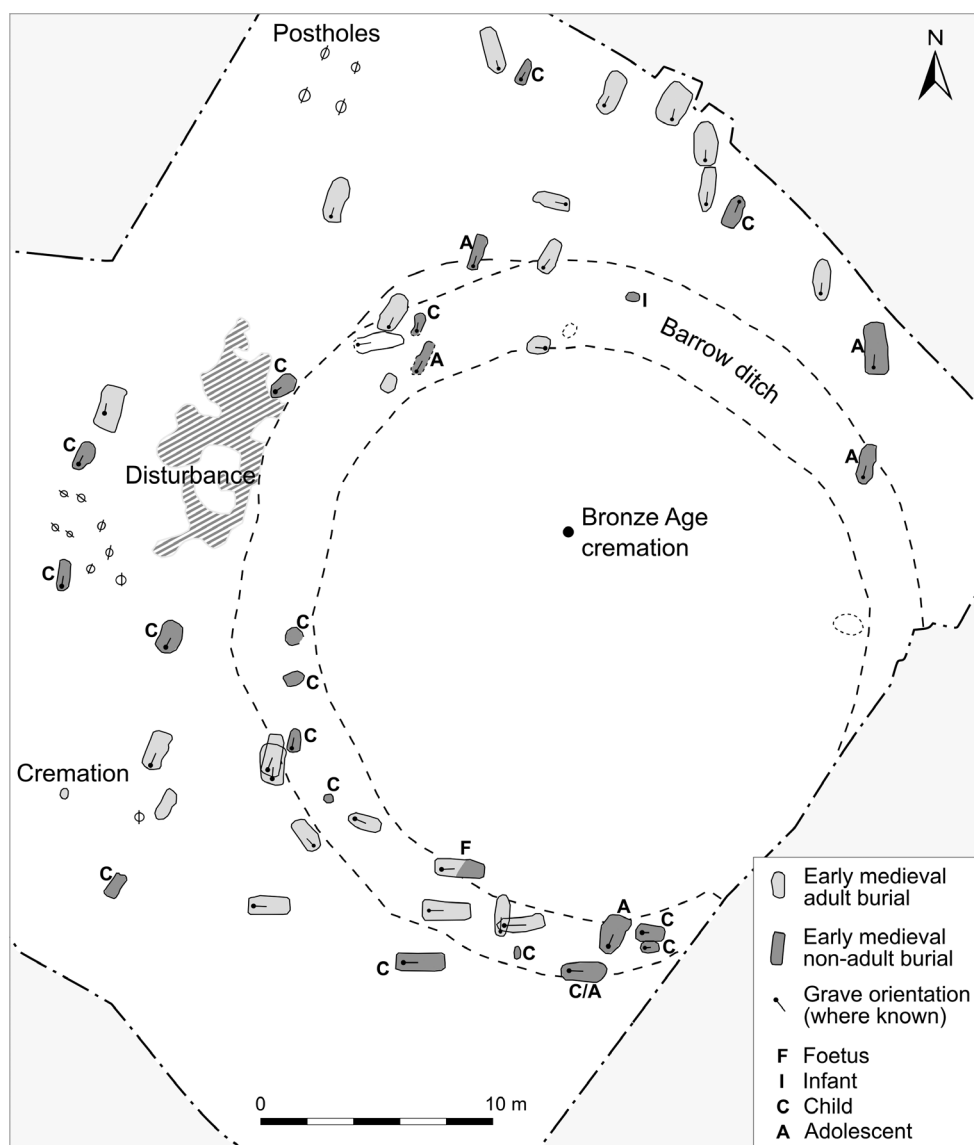


Figure 41. Plan of Storey's Meadow cemetery, Hampshire (redrawn after Ford and Falys 2016).

inverted urn was located within the area enclosed by the ditch, and was probably contemporary with the construction of the monument, although this could not be conclusively determined. The Early to Middle Bronze Age crouched inhumation of an infant, which provided a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the ring-ditch, and an adult cremation with fragments of Early Bronze Age biconical urn, partly truncated by a crouched early medieval burial, were also found.

The ground surface within the ditch circuit was underlain by unweathered chalk, indicating the former presence of a mound, levelled by ploughing. The absence of

any early medieval intrusive burials within the area enclosed by the ditch can perhaps also be explained by the actions of later ploughing. Evidence was found for cultivation up to the edge of the ring-ditch in the Romano-British period or possibly earlier, and although the ditch had become in-filled by the time the early medieval cemetery was founded, the mound is unlikely to have been ploughed out until after this final phase in its life-history as a funerary site. The mound was evidently a visible and a significant place in the landscape, used to define the cemetery and reinforce its identity. It is possible, however, that the mound itself was not disturbed for intrusive burial, and that, with the exception of the burials in the ditch, the cemetery was predominantly 'associative' in nature.

In addition to the single early medieval cremation, nine of the early medieval inhumations were also radiocarbon dated. The earliest date produced was AD 413–599 (at 100 per cent probability),⁹² the latest was AD 652–728 (at 73 per cent probability),⁹³ and the remainder fell within the sixth- or seventh-century range. This suggests that the cemetery was in use broadly between the early sixth century and the end of the seventh century. The burials were furnished with a variety of grave-goods; predominantly knives, with a smaller number of spearheads, copper alloy and iron dress fittings and jewellery, single items of pottery and one ivory needle. The individuals were buried in a variety of crouched and extended positions, with south–north featuring as the most common alignment. With a few exceptions, the burials were either broadly aligned with the ring-ditch or orientated with the head pointing towards it. There was no notable gender imbalance.

Storey's Meadow should be considered in the context of other broadly contemporary community cemeteries, many examples of which have been found on the slopes of the Meon and Itchen valleys (e.g. Shavard's Farm, Droxford, Itchen Abbas, Worthy Park, Twyford School). It is, however, distinguished from other cemeteries in the area by its direct reuse of a prehistoric monument, together with some other unusual characteristics. There was a high proportion of child and adolescent burials: 50 per cent of the cemetery population was non-adult. Moreover, a higher than usual frequency of serious pathologies and skeletal abnormalities – including tuberculosis, sinusitis, hip dysplasia and leukaemia – were identified. There was also evidence of medical intervention: three cases of well-healed trepanation (all within the south-western quadrant of the ring-ditch, on the outer edge of the ditch, and all without grave-goods), and one possible case of crutch use. This has led Ford and Falys to venture that skilled medical practitioners were operating in the West Meon area.⁹⁴ Overall, the health and social status of the cemetery population at Storey's Meadow is comparable with those of other community cemeteries in the area, demonstrating indicators of poverty and poor living conditions. While disease and low life expectancy undoubtedly affected all sectors of society at this time, the evidence from this site certainly reinforces the case that the funerary appropriation of earlier monuments was not restricted to powerful individuals or elite groups in the Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon period.

⁹² 1557 ± 46 BP.

⁹³ 1318 ± 33 BP.

⁹⁴ Ford and Falys 2016, 104.

While the propensity for community cemeteries in the study area to be situated in accessible locations adjacent to routeways is evident, we should not assume that mere convenience or practical expediency were necessarily communities' foremost considerations in the selection of funerary locales. Given the recurrent positioning of community cemeteries alongside routes that led towards probable areas of grazing land, it could be argued that part of their significance lay in controlling access to this land, although it must of course be stressed this is only one of a number of possible interpretations and that the siting of cemeteries was undoubtedly driven by a range of factors. How the regulation of access to resources through burial may have functioned in practice is unclear, but it is possible to surmise that cemeteries provided visual cues for people moving through the landscape, signalling the rights to land of particular groups, and were perhaps perceived as metaphysical boundaries.⁹⁵ This would clearly have been a multifaceted process, and burials may have acted in conjunction with man-made physical boundaries or natural places that were imbued with meaning, for which evidence may not have survived. Cemeteries adjacent to routes leading up to common pasture may also have emphasised and reinforced the sense of community identity fostered by shared grazing rights.

How, then, can the appropriation of earlier monuments at community cemeteries be interpreted in the context of territory and identity? Group identity is likely to have been expressed and consolidated via the medium of funerary events, which provided stimuli for kin groups to convene and to forge collective memories.⁹⁶ Prominent landscape features alongside communication routes, as mnemonic aids, formed an integral part of these processes.⁹⁷ These enduring, ancient monuments perhaps added legitimacy, authenticity and gravitas to claims to land and rights over territory.⁹⁸ Combining ephemeral funerary events with permanent above-ground memorials enabled the creation of long-lived memories connected to individuals and the community, which could be called upon at a later date.⁹⁹ Ritual procession and group assembly, during or after funerary events, may also have helped to consolidate boundaries, as well as playing a major role in identity reaffirmation.¹⁰⁰ Prehistoric barrows may themselves have been situated on existing ancient boundaries, as at Portway East. At Storey's Meadow and Snell's Corner, within the possible extent of the *regio* of the *Meonware*, sizeable prehistoric barrows were selected as the focus of cemeteries in the sixth and seventh centuries, if not earlier, with funerary use continuing into the late seventh or early eighth century. The apparent associative, rather than intrusive, nature of the burials here could imply a greater sense of respect for the 'ancestors',¹⁰¹ although the former presence of secondary burials in the plough-levelled mound at Storey's Meadow cannot be ruled out, given their discovery in the barrow ditch. The fact that the

⁹⁵ Semple 2003, 83.

⁹⁶ Pantos and Semple 2004; Williams 1997, 17–25; 2006; Semple 2013, 44.

⁹⁷ Devlin 2007, 46.

⁹⁸ Bevan 1999, 75; Lucy 1992; Williams 1997.

⁹⁹ Halsall 2010, 253; Williams 2006, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Williams 1999b, 75; 2006, 186.

¹⁰¹ Charles-Edwards 1976; Semple 2008, 415.

Bronze Age barrow at Storey's Meadow had been destroyed does of course raise some important questions about the apparent distribution and chronology of early medieval secondary barrow burial. Many examples on favourable agricultural land (more likely to be community cemeteries) may have been lost, while those on more marginal land on the higher downland (predominantly isolated seventh-century burials) have survived by virtue of less intensive land use.¹⁰²

It is possible that some Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon community cemeteries actively marked out boundaries and thresholds as well as reinforcing them. This could be regarded as a somewhat 'processual' interpretation; indeed, the idea that megaliths defined territorial boundaries and legitimated rights to resources was espoused by Colin Renfrew in the 1970s,¹⁰³ and was later criticised for its disregard for historical context and specific cultural meaning.¹⁰⁴ Similar concepts in the context of Anglo-Saxon burial were also approached from a structuralist perspective by Shephard, who argued that barrows communicated ownership in a highly literal way.¹⁰⁵ Although current academic debate has moved away from functionalist interpretations, territorial legitimisation through burial and monumentality remains a prominent theme in early medieval scholarship. Brookes, for example, has argued that funerary monuments in early medieval Kent were used to 'visibly differentiate community territories',¹⁰⁶ while Semple has emphasised the significance of burial and the appropriation of earlier features in defining group associations and claims.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, as we have seen, recent work on Irish traditions re-emphasises a strong connection between cemeteries and the margins of topographical and territorial zones, and the use of burial mounds as boundary markers.¹⁰⁸ There is no reason why a similar relationship between boundaries and burials could not have existed in Wessex, although unlike Bonney we cannot go so far as to associate them with middle to Late Anglo-Saxon estate boundaries; at best, we can argue that funerary sites relate to natural boundaries in the landscape or earlier forms of territorial division.¹⁰⁹

Isolated burials, the rural economy and social change

While broadly similar motivations regarding territory and land use can also be proposed for the distinct phenomenon of isolated burial within antecedent features, the chronology and specific topographic context of this practice are highly distinctive. Although dating is often vague, most examples of this burial type within the study area can be placed within the late sixth and seventh centuries. Such sites are generally in more elevated positions than cemeteries, occupying what may have been common pasture. It could be suggested that their emergence partly relates

¹⁰² Reynolds 2009, 68.

¹⁰³ Renfrew 1976.

¹⁰⁴ Hodder 1984, 53.

¹⁰⁵ Shephard 1979a.

¹⁰⁶ Brookes 2007b, 149.

¹⁰⁷ Semple 2013, 46.

¹⁰⁸ Such as O'Brien 2009, 142–3; Ó Carragáin and Sheehan 2010.

¹⁰⁹ O'Brien 2009, 142.

to agricultural intensification and changing landscape character during a transformative period termed the 'long eighth century' (c. AD 660–830),¹¹⁰ although the start of this period of change can probably now be shifted back by several decades.¹¹¹ Pollen sequences indicate significant changes in land use from the seventh century onwards, in terms of the increasing cultivation of cereals and other arable crops, which was partly related to improvements in plough technology (though this process of 'cerealisation' does not necessarily imply a decline in the importance of animal husbandry), and the appearance of improved grassland.¹¹² Indeed, throughout north-west Europe this period is characterised by similar changes in the rural landscape and 'a measure of economic expansion',¹¹³ manifested in high-status residences as well as coastal trading centres. Though early English elite wealth is unlikely to have been directly reliant on the yield from local rural communities, the generation and extraction of surpluses to support an increasing number of permanently occupied royal estate centres must, in part, account for this phase of agricultural intensification.¹¹⁴ A more prescribed use of space, essential for a more productive and specialised system of farming, can also be inferred from settlement sites and from documentary evidence, such as the Laws of Ine.¹¹⁵

In the second quarter of the sixth century, the effects of a global climatic crisis coupled with a probable influx of Justinianic plague into England are likely to have weakened an already declining population.¹¹⁶ Though the population started to rise again by the seventh century, further well-documented outbreaks of plague in the second half of that century are also likely to have left their mark. But such events also create opportunities for those who survive and often expedite changes in the social order as a consequence. The increasing exploitation and regulation of land and resources during this pivotal period may have led to bolder statements of ownership or rightful inheritance by an emerging landed class. As has previously been conjectured, the placement of isolated burials in earlier barrows may be seen in a similar context to the ancestral *fertra* referenced in contemporary Irish law tracts, the 'occupants' of which, according to superstitious belief, arbitrated and wielded power over claims to land and repelled hostile advances, even in death.¹¹⁷ Similar ideas of the powerful dead are inverted by Dunn, who theorises that the construction of ring-ditches around graves might represent a strategy to prevent revenant activity among plague victims.¹¹⁸

Turning again to the evidence from Wessex, examples of isolated high-status burial are largely restricted to the chalk downland of Wiltshire and Dorset. In Cranborne Chase, the probable seventh-century intrusive barrow burials adjacent to the linear earthworks of Bokerley Dyke and Grim's Ditch – Woodyates Inn, Pentridge 34 and Martin 28 – are to be seen as indicative of attempts to empha-

¹¹⁰ Wickham and Hansen 2000; Hamerow 2002, 192; Rippon 2008.

¹¹¹ Blair 2018, 8. Indeed, Blair is more inclined towards a 'long seventh century'.

¹¹² Rippon *et al.* 2006; Banham and Faith 2014, 39, 75–6.

¹¹³ Williamson 2013, 19.

¹¹⁴ Rippon *et al.* 2015, 34–5.

¹¹⁵ Hamerow 2002, 193.

¹¹⁶ Maddicott 1997; Baillie 1999.

¹¹⁷ Charles-Edwards 1976; O'Brien 2009, 142–3.

¹¹⁸ Dunn 2009, 95–6.

sise an established territorial boundary.¹¹⁹ Primary monumentality in the form of male barrow burials on the South Wiltshire Downs and the Marlborough Downs can be seen as more powerful, ostentatious symbols, initiated in response to challenges to territorial control.¹²⁰ Indeed, the southward encroachment of the Mercian kingdom was decisive in shaping the territoriality and burial record of the Marlborough Downs area. From the mid-seventh century, Mercian expansion following the annexation of the Hwicce resulted in the Gewissan abandonment of the bishopric at Dorchester-on-Thames by the AD 660s and led to a frequently contested political frontier between the Gewisse and the Mercians in the northern half of modern Wiltshire, which features heavily in the *Chronicle* as the setting for numerous battles.¹²¹ Elsewhere in the study area, the apparent absence of isolated barrow burials or monument appropriation for individual burial could signify that there was less pressure on resources or that there was no dominant or contested authority.¹²² It is possible, however, that such burials have simply not been found or recognised. The male burial within the earthworks of a hilltop enclosure at Oliver's Battery, together with isolated female burials that may be associated with barrows at Preshaw Farm and Dolly's Firs, suggest that the practice was employed in Hampshire and that the comparative paucity of examples may largely reflect the lack of an antiquarian tradition.

There is a tendency for isolated burials to be associated with long-distance ridge-top droveways. Preshaw Farm (Hampshire), for example, is adjacent to a routeway linking Exton and Meonstoke with the downland. Swallowcliffe Down, Alvediston and Coombe Bissett I and II, as well as Yatesbury II (all in Wiltshire), are also situated next to long-distance droveways, later *herepaðas*. As noted above, common land is thought to have 'straddled' boundaries between territories, and long-distance droveways were in similar locations. Certain routeways, particularly those that followed watersheds, may thus have been situated in 'buffer zones' between territories. This was certainly the case in the Wolds of East Yorkshire, which on a larger scale formed a seasonally traversed upland 'stepping stone' between two core lowland regions.¹²³ There, the positioning of isolated burials adjacent to upland routes from the sixth century onwards indicates an 'increasing attempt by a minority in signalling a particularly distinctive identity via the funerary scene',¹²⁴ while in Wessex, too, there appears to have been an intensification in the exploitation of long-distance watershed routeways by an elite minority.

Whereas for Kent, Brookes notes that sites visible from Roman roads are favoured for burial over those overlooked by more 'mundane' droveways,¹²⁵ in Wessex both types of long-distance route are utilised. An often-cited clause in the Laws of Ine, which discourages travel *butan wege geond wudu gonge*, 'through the wood off the highway',¹²⁶ suggests that importance was given to main thoroughfares. Visibility

¹¹⁹ *Contra* Eagles 2004.

¹²⁰ Semple 2003.

¹²¹ Yorke 1990, 136; Semple 2013, 38.

¹²² Semple 2008, 415.

¹²³ Semple 2013, 27.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹²⁵ Brookes 2007b, 151.

¹²⁶ Attenborough 1922, 42–3.

from such routes may thus have been preferred for the location of funerary sites, as it allowed a wider audience to be targeted.¹²⁷ There is, however, an obvious issue with interpreting intrusive barrow burial in terms of display and visibility, as although barrows were prominent features it remains to be determined how the presence of intrusive early medieval burials could be recognised by passersby unless externally marked in some way.¹²⁸ In practice, display is likely to have relied on local or regional knowledge of the significance of landscape features – both man-made and natural – and, while the funeral itself was inevitably transient, lasting memories of individuals and communities were forged through a combination of processes.

Monumentality and social structure

The evidence from community cemeteries in the area of study has reaffirmed the notion that the appropriation of earlier features was the preserve not merely of the upper echelons of society throughout the fifth to eighth centuries but also of 'ordinary people and communities'.¹²⁹ While monument reuse in the context of community cemeteries occurred throughout the period of study, then, the emergence from the late sixth century of isolated primary and secondary barrow burials may be considered a reflection of an increasingly defined elite class. But even intrusive barrow burials that appear to lack elaborate grave-goods are nevertheless characterised by a substantial investment of labour and resources. The appearance of above-ground monumentality in the form of penannular ditches and new barrows is another feature of this transitional period that must be contextualised.

Comparatively little is known about the specifics of Early Anglo-Saxon social structure. The cemeteries and settlements of the subsistence-level communities of the protohistoric fifth and sixth centuries provide little in the way of evidence for stratification, with social hierarchies becoming more clearly discernible in the archaeological record only from the late sixth and seventh centuries.¹³⁰ Still, it seems unlikely that society was wholly egalitarian even in the immediate post-Roman period, as this had not been the case in Roman Britain, or indeed anywhere else in contemporary north-west Europe.¹³¹ The general consensus is that Early Anglo-Saxon society was kin-based, although kin groups in a broader sense are likely to have been defined by identity and affiliations beyond actual blood relations.¹³² Although it is problematic to extrapolate kinship ties from the archaeological record, the study of exchange and gift-giving can be a fruitful approach, as material culture is likely to have played an important role in establishing relationships between individuals and mediating relationships between

¹²⁷ Bevan 1999, 88.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹²⁹ Semple 2013, 51.

¹³⁰ Härke 1997; Hines 1995.

¹³¹ Scull 1993; Williams 1999a; Crewe 2012, 209.

¹³² Woolf 2000, 92.

communities.¹³³ In the kinship model, a single prominent individual or family retains a monopoly on resources, although this control is often short-lived.¹³⁴ The 'centre-periphery' theory advanced by Richard Hodges saw the growing power of Merovingian Francia as having a destabilising effect on Early Anglo-Saxon society, the influx of prestige goods fostering increasing competition between groups to manipulate and retain their hegemony over exchange networks.¹³⁵ Gift-exchange may also have accelerated the process of aggregation of kin groups around powerful leaders. Continental influence, reinforced by the adoption of Christianity, ultimately culminated in a tributary system that relied on defined social classes and the establishment of fixed trading places, such as *Hamwic*, by the Middle Anglo-Saxon period.¹³⁶ Gift- and commodity-exchange are not necessarily mutually exclusive, however, and nor should the latter be seen as a direct replacement of the former.¹³⁷

The group of richly furnished sixth-century burials focused on a Bronze Age round barrow at The Shallows in Breamore, Hampshire, epitomises the kin-based system of gift-exchange. This site is located on a gravel promontory on the edge of the floodplain of the Salisbury Avon, less than 200m from the river and 3km downstream of the point at which it crosses the Wiltshire border (Figure 42). Metal detecting here in the 1990s first revealed sixth-century artefacts, most notably an inscribed bronze Byzantine pail probably imported from Antioch in modern Turkey.¹³⁸ Only a few other examples of vessels of this type have been discovered in England: one from Bromeswell in Suffolk and two from Chessell Down on the Isle of Wight.¹³⁹ Anomalies were subsequently identified through geophysical survey, and test-pitting in 1998 confirmed the presence of graves. The inhumations of eleven individuals were recovered from four of the five trenches excavated on the mound in 2001, although the complete extent of the cemetery was not determined. Full publication of the cemetery has only recently been realised.¹⁴⁰ Exceptional numbers of grave-goods were recovered for the size of the cemetery, including six stave-built buckets and numerous shields and spears. While the high proportion of weapon burials, together with several double and triple burials, might invite suggestions that it represented a 'warrior graveyard', the cemetery population does include children and almost certainly women, and no evidence was found for weapon injuries.¹⁴¹ Among a range of possible interpretations for the context of this cemetery discussed by Hinton and Worrell, perhaps the most plausible is that this was a 'frontier' community, occupying a location close to the border with the postulated territory of the *Wilsæte* (although whether such a territory existed this early is debatable). The group buried here might have maintained affiliations with territories lying to the south – perhaps the Isle of Wight – rather than northwards

¹³³ Sharples 2010, 92; Scull 2011.

¹³⁴ Sahlins 1972; Hodges 1988; Brookes 2007a, 23.

¹³⁵ Brookes 2007a, 23–4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24; Hodges 1988, 5.

¹³⁷ Moreland 2000, 75, 80.

¹³⁸ Edwards 2001, 9.

¹³⁹ Eagles and Ager 2004, 92.

¹⁴⁰ Hinton and Worrell 2017.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

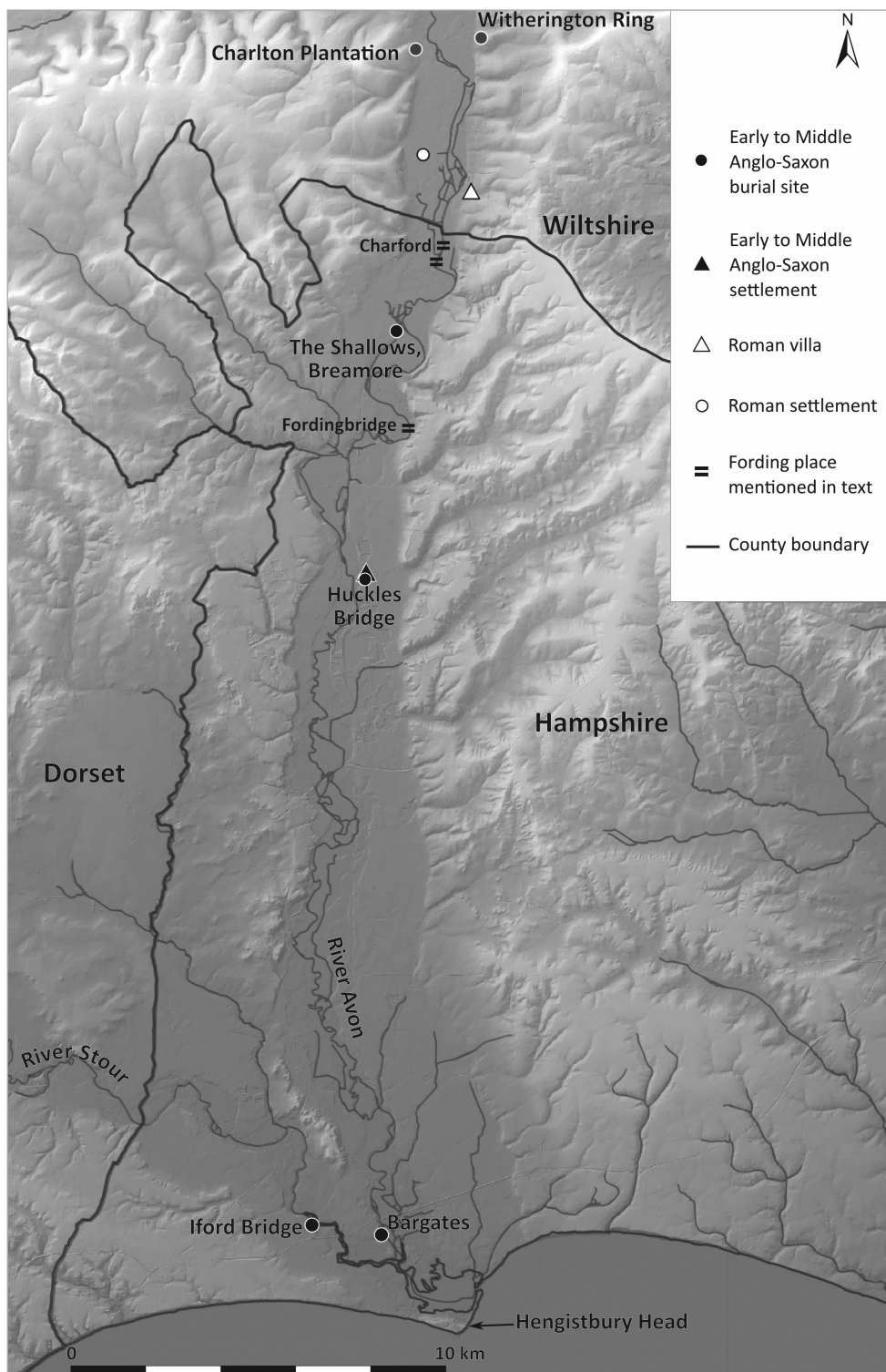


Figure 42. Breamore, Hampshire, in the context of the Salisbury Avon valley.

towards the Upper Thames valley, as communities further up the Avon (such as those buried at Charlton Plantation) may have done.¹⁴²

Those mourning the dead at Breamore were evidently keen to demonstrate the privileged status and far-reaching connections of their kin group through the conspicuous display of imported prestige items. It is not known what goods, materials or services were offered in return, but the buckets, pail and glass vessel might suggest that their status was to a certain extent enacted and reproduced through hospitality and feasting.¹⁴³ In addition to the impressive but ephemeral display of the funeral, a prominent landscape feature was selected in order to achieve maximum visibility from the River Avon for posterity. This was a navigable route¹⁴⁴ over which the kin group perhaps exerted control – or at least were keen to display a pretence of control, even if this masked insecurities about their position in the area. Artefactual evidence recovered predominantly from cemeteries suggests that the Salisbury Avon valley was particularly well connected, both provincially and with the wider area, particularly the Isle of Wight, which may have served as a trading post for goods into the area and further afield.¹⁴⁵ A perforated coin-weight found close to the cemetery at The Shallows implies that commodity-exchange took place on or near the site and hints at the development of more sophisticated economic arrangements.¹⁴⁶ Reynolds has recently argued that some Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Kent had an ‘after-life’ as the sites of markets and assembly places.¹⁴⁷ River boundaries, fords and bridging points, with their liminal yet accessible qualities, as well as mounds, were particularly valued locations for assembly.¹⁴⁸ The Breamore barrow was situated on a raised gravel terrace, adjacent to the river and in close proximity to a number of fording places, making it an attractive site for gathering in a variety of contexts: gift-exchange, trade, and perhaps an arena for kin-group relations and identity consolidation at funerary as well as non-funerary events.

It is perhaps significant that all of the other sixth-century examples of cemeteries associated with barrows in the study area are found either in the Salisbury Avon valley area or in the central Marlborough Downs at Overton Hill and all focus on morphologically unusual barrows. These sites lie within a corridor that formed a direct route between the English Channel and the Upper Thames valley. At Winterbourne Gunner, too, Frankish influence is manifest in the *francisca* or ‘throwing axe’, among other items.¹⁴⁹ Grave-goods recovered from these cemeteries transmit diverse and eclectic cultural signals and include, for example, Anglian items as well as recycled or reproduced Roman pieces.¹⁵⁰

The barrow was thus a potent symbol for these ‘cosmopolitan’ Early Anglo-Saxon kin groups. The appropriation of earlier monuments, as well as the creation

¹⁴² Ibid., 139–40.

¹⁴³ Edwards 2001, 78.

¹⁴⁴ Hinton and Worrell 2017, 140.

¹⁴⁵ Ulmschneider 1999; 2003.

¹⁴⁶ Hinton and Worrell 2017, 137, 140.

¹⁴⁷ Reynolds 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Semple 2013, 73.

¹⁴⁹ Musty and Stratton 1964.

¹⁵⁰ Eagles 2001, 218.

of primary mounds, can be considered as part of a wider European phenomenon of barrow building and above-ground commemoration during the fifth to eighth centuries, in areas such as the Rhineland and northern Switzerland and southern Scandinavia.¹⁵¹ Through the appropriation of barrows, kin groups at Breamore and Winterbourne Gunner could thus demonstrate their far-reaching connections, not only with their grave-goods but also through their mode of burial. Although the reuse of existing monuments could be regarded as a socially inferior practice to the construction of new mounds, it perhaps had the additional benefit of fulfilling the aim of consolidating territorial control by referencing an established local and ancestral tradition.¹⁵²

The seventh century saw an upsurge in trade, partly related to the growing requirements of the Church and associated ecclesiastical communities, although the availability of certain Mediterranean imports seems to have waned.¹⁵³ By the latter half of the same century, production in southern Hampshire, particularly in the Itchen valley north of *Hamwic*, probably exceeded subsistence level.¹⁵⁴ *Emporia* were one facet of an emerging group of diverse settlement sites in the Middle Anglo-Saxon period.¹⁵⁵ Royal interest in fixed trading places was particularly focused on the revenue generated through the extraction of tribute or tolls, and *Hamwic* expanded and flourished under West Saxon control, with access to the Thames having been curtailed by Mercian interests.¹⁵⁶ Above-ground monumentality, in the form of penannular ditches (in some cases perhaps denoting the former presence of covering mounds) and marker posts, is a notable feature of cemeteries in *Hamwic* and could be seen as a way of asserting status in this competitive environment. Seventh-century graves similarly surrounded by ditches have also recently been excavated at Stoke Quay in the East Anglian *emporium* of Ipswich.¹⁵⁷ The funerary idiom of ring-ditches and small, low barrows perhaps reflects an increased concern for an enforced separation between the living and the dead in growing population centres such as the *emporia*. It also invites comparisons with the barrow cemeteries of Kent, an area with which *Hamwic* and southern Hampshire were closely connected.¹⁵⁸

Successive funerary and ceremonial events, particularly in the context of more extensive or populous cemeteries, led to the accumulation of layers of meaning, which necessitated materialisation in some form. As the positions of the graves themselves may not otherwise have remained visible, monuments and markers in the form of barrows, ring-ditches or posts were employed to convey complex information about people and events. Though these were recurring practices within a recognised repertoire, each act of memorialisation represents a unique statement, the significance of which cannot be fully comprehended by us. Equally important and imbued with specific context were the materials used in the construction of

¹⁵¹ Blair 2005, 53; Halsall 2010, 279.

¹⁵² Bradley 1987, 10; Loveluck 1995, 88–9.

¹⁵³ Hinton 1990.

¹⁵⁴ Fasham and Whinney 1991, 78; Stoodley 2002, 327.

¹⁵⁵ Moreland 2000; Wright 2015b.

¹⁵⁶ Stoodley 2002, 327–8; Yorke 1995, 62.

¹⁵⁷ Shelley 2013.

¹⁵⁸ Stoodley 2002, 328.

these monuments. Wooden posts, which may have been carved with decoration, were used as markers in cemeteries as well as for standalone memorials or in 'shrines' elsewhere in the landscape, and it has been suggested that certain species of tree were favoured for their inherent properties.¹⁵⁹ In the recently excavated Middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Bulford on Salisbury Plain, which is associated with Neolithic hengiform enclosures, a series of large postholes was located not in close proximity to grave cuts but rather in 'empty' spaces at the end of a row of burials, aligned with the head end of other graves in the row. It has thus been speculated that these markers may have represented available plots in the cemetery or the prospective graves of important individuals.¹⁶⁰ Of course, it is inevitable that many seemingly unremarkable graves in flat cemeteries were picked out and marked above ground level, in order to prevent intercutting as much as to commemorate the dead, in ways that are no longer visible to us.

Conclusion

While it is unfeasible to fully or accurately reconstruct the territorial and administrative arrangements by which the Early Anglo-Saxon landscape was circumscribed at a local or sub-regional level, a picture emerges of the antiquity and endurance of certain elements of social territories irrespective of fluctuating political affiliations or overarching authorities. This distils down to the ways in which groups of people united organically within a common environmental framework, working with the resource bases that were available to them. We cannot assume, then, that where boundary arrangements did persist this was necessarily due to conscious or continuous maintenance. Instead, we can conceive of the underlying natural topography and environment as having had a universal influence on the societies that inhabited a particular landscape over successive periods, leading to the recurrent reuse or replication of similar patterns of organisation over the *longue durée*.¹⁶¹

A re-evaluation of the relationship between the boundaries of smaller-scale territories that are likely to have been in existence at least by the time of the Conquest (ecclesiastical parishes and Domesday hundreds) and fifth- to ninth-century burial sites has revealed that, broadly speaking, correlations are present in the counties of Wiltshire and Dorset but are weaker or absent in Hampshire and Somerset. Sub-regional differences within Wessex are likely to result in part from territorial reorganisation to varying degrees during the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. Crucially, the most strongly identifiable correlations are biased towards the chalk-land. Here, the networks of strip parishes and associated valley-side routeways, and of hundreds and related watersheds and long-distance droveways, were in many cases closely connected with the locations of funerary ritual.

A compelling link is thus illuminated between burial sites and areas of pastoral land use and the movement of people and resources, such as livestock. Correspondences between different types of burial site and different categories

¹⁵⁹ Blair 2005, 185–7; Semple 2013, 66.

¹⁶⁰ Hilts 2016.

¹⁶¹ Williamson 2013, 105.

or geographical configurations of routeway are also apparent. The evidence from Wessex strongly reinforces the idea that changes occurred in the purpose and intensity of monument reuse in the seventh century, connected to changing agrarian practices and the altered nature of landholding – a matter that will be explored further in the next chapter. In a climate of agricultural intensification, and given the increasing pressures on the availability of land for grazing that this may have provoked, it is possible to speculate that the presence of burials – and particularly above-ground funerary monuments – effectively proscribed the arable cultivation of the ground that they occupied, owing either to superstition or to the impracticability of ploughing. This may have provided the means by which to stake claims to pasture or other rights to the land, and ensured that these monuments were retained as important markers or mnemonics, which in turn afforded continuing legitimacy to the demarcation of land.

The Church and the Funerary Landscape

In the words of Alan Everitt, ‘the church has had a greater impact on the landscape and economy ... than any other human agency.’¹ Granted, Everitt was referring specifically in this case to Kent, which was of course subject to a set of circumstances that were in many ways distinct from those experienced by other areas of southern England. Still, the transformations wrought by the ascendancy of Christianity can be as keenly recognised in Wessex as elsewhere. Any radical change to a dominant religious or political order can provoke or expedite tangible changes in how the landscape is structured and exploited – within, of course, the constraints of the physical environment: geology, soils, topography and climate.² What was uniquely transformative about the influence of the Roman Church in the Middle Anglo-Saxon period was its capacity to allow elites to consolidate their power – owing in part to its innately hierarchical structure – and thus to effect change in the landscape. The Church as an institution was responsible for profound alterations in the nature of landholding. The stability afforded by perpetual ownership provided an incentive for royal powers to invest in the land and to improve productivity.³ Furthermore, the generation of agricultural surpluses through increasingly specialised means of production was essential for supporting the new array of ecclesiastical communities and monastic houses, which were occupied on a permanent basis, in contrast to the predominantly peripatetic royal entourages. Of course, it would be unwise to exaggerate the role of the Church as a driver of landscape change, and we must be careful not to overplay the top-down influence of elite engagement with this ascendant ideology. The fact that the vast majority of the surviving written sources for the Middle Anglo-Saxon period relate to the lands held by major minsters creates a degree of bias, in that ecclesiastical land organisation is unavoidably presented as typical. It is nevertheless likely that across the board, in both secular and ecclesiastical contexts, royal authorities structured their lands in a similar fashion, with estate centres surrounded by a network of specialised dependent settlements.⁴

This chapter explores the impact of the conversion on burial rites and mortuary topography in early medieval Wessex. Can we, for example, identify cemeteries associated with church foundations from an early date, or does burial location continue to be influenced by other factors? Focusing in at the level of the grave, to what extent do funerary rites change during this period, and at what pace? Can, or indeed should, such changes be linked explicitly to Christianisation, or more

¹ Everitt 1986, 181.

² Turner 2006, 3.

³ Rippon 2010, 62.

⁴ Wright 2015a.

obliquely to the wide-ranging societal and landscape transformations that appear to characterise the period from the seventh century? Accordingly, this chapter investigates how elites – perhaps including newly converted Christians – might have considered the positioning of the dead as part of this new emphasis on ordering and restructuring the environment, potentially drawing on ancient motifs to legitimise their authority in the present.

What can be gleaned of the precise chronology of the conversion of the West Saxon kingdom is frustratingly obscure; the historical sources provide precious little detail in this regard, and indeed on the region in general at this time. Both Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* do, however, make reference to the baptism of the Gewissan king Cynegils in the mid-AD 630s by the apparently Frankish bishop Birinus, who would shortly thereafter establish his episcopal seat at Dorchester-on-Thames.⁵ While possible 'sub-Roman' origins for this community at Dorchester have been posited, evidence for continuity from late Roman foundations is generally elusive and difficult to verify throughout eastern Wessex. By the early seventh century, the inhabitants of the former *civitas* of Dumnonia to the south-west – encompassing Cornwall, most of Devon and western Somerset – had ostensibly been practising Christians for well over a century, even if a far more ancient vein of syncretic polytheism continued to perfume the religious landscape of the countryside. In rural Somerset, Christianity is thought to have made headway from the fifth century through indigenous, grass-roots activity, rather than as a result of contact with incoming missionaries in any official capacity.⁶ Still, Insular ecclesiastical communities were far from isolated in the fifth century: the distribution of epigraphic material and other material culture bearing Christian symbolism is strongly indicative of cross-Channel interaction and cultural exchange between post-imperial Britain and Northern Gaul (and beyond).⁷ A considerable measure of continuity in the structure and governance of the 'Late Antique' Church from its late Roman foundations in the west should also be acknowledged. It is clear that a functioning episcopal hierarchy was maintained to some degree, despite the elusive whereabouts of the bishoprics and the apparent lack of geographical continuity from British to West Saxon episcopal centres.

Minster churches, parochiae and burial sites

The status and precise character of early English churches and religious houses, known by the all-encompassing terms *monasterium* (Latin) and its Old English rendering *mynster* – which could denote anything from monastery to parochial mother-church – are difficult to determine.⁸ It has long been argued that a key function of early church foundations in Anglo-Saxon England was to provide pastoral care for those residing within extensive parishes (*parochiae*), which were invariably cotermi-

⁵ ASC 635; HE III, 7; and see Yorke 1995, 171.

⁶ Costen 2011, 178.

⁷ Petts 2014.

⁸ Blair 2005, 80.

nous with royal administrative districts⁹ – a theory that came to be known as the ‘minster model’ or ‘minster hypothesis’. According to this explanatory framework, the seventh and eighth centuries saw the proliferation of a network of religious communities, founded by royal powers and served by clergy who were primarily responsible for the provision of spiritual services to the inhabitants of a defined territory. It is against this background that a significant body of work on reconstructing the pattern of early medieval minster churches and their *parochiae* in each of the counties of the study area has been carried out since the 1970s.¹⁰ By the mid-1990s, however, the established view had begun to be challenged on a number of grounds, most notably by Eric Cambridge and David Rollason,¹¹ as part of a revisionist perspective that not only questioned whether all minsters could have had parochial obligations from such an early stage but also called into doubt the very antiquity of the system of *parochiae*. While such provisions and arrangements are certainly well attested by the tenth and eleventh centuries, as minsters began to be supplemented by a multitude of private local churches and *parochiae* began to fragment, the evidence has been dismissed by many as slight for earlier centuries.¹² Still, few would disagree that minsters formed the basis of the earliest English parochial system,¹³ and what evidence *does* survive for the existence of minster churches and large *parochiae* at least by the eighth century is certainly convincing.¹⁴

Hampshire

Research conducted by P. H. Hase into the development of the parish in Hampshire – which has its place very much within the ‘minster model’ paradigm – supports the idea that the system of mother churches emerged in the late seventh or early eighth century as a result of an act of royal policy, as part of a planned strategy to ensure that every *regio* contained a parochial church, usually within its *villa regalis* (royal vill or estate centre). Hase also demonstrated that the postulated Hampshire *parochiae* coincide well with ‘archaic’ hundreds.¹⁵ The ‘core zone of early monastic development’ in Hampshire seems to have been focused on the area close to the confluence of the Test and Itchen and around Southampton Water.¹⁶ The Old Minster, established inside Winchester’s Roman walls by the mid-seventh century, became the seat of the West Saxon see in the AD 660s, and was the only bishopric in Wessex until the founding of another at Sherborne, Dorset, in the first decade of the eighth century. There is also a reference by Bede to the presence in AD 686 of a monastery at *Hreutford*, ‘reed ford’ – the crossing of the Test between Redbridge and Eling, a few kilometres west of Southampton (the monastery itself probably having been located at Eling, on the west bank of the river).¹⁷ On the opposite side of the

⁹ Page 1914–15; Kemp 1967–8; Hase 1975; 1988; 1994; Blair 1988, 37–8.

¹⁰ Hase 1975; 1988; 1994; Aston 1986; Costen 1992; Pitt 1999; Hall 2000.

¹¹ Cambridge and Rollason 1995.

¹² Cf. Tinti 2005.

¹³ Blair 2005, 5.

¹⁴ Rippon 2012, 200.

¹⁵ Cf. Klingelhöfer 1992.

¹⁶ Hase 1994, 52–69; Ulmschneider 2003; Blair 2005, 151.

¹⁷ HE IV, 16; Hase 1988, 45.

Test, towards Southampton, Nursling has been identified as the site of *Nhutscele*, a monastery in which Boniface was educated in the late seventh century, although it is possible that this monastery was actually located at Romsey, a few kilometres to the north, where a major nunnery was established in AD 907.¹⁸ In Southampton itself, the minster church of St Mary's must also have been completed by around AD 725.¹⁹

Burials that definitively relate to these early foundations in southern Hampshire are fairly elusive. Among the 700 mostly unfurnished inhumations found in the 1960s at Winchester Old Minster, a number may date to the period of its foundation in the seventh century; however, the full report and results of radiocarbon dating, which will no doubt shed more light on the character and chronology of the earliest phases of burial, still await publication.²⁰ Forty-five burials discovered during excavations at Romsey Abbey in 1973–91 and 2004 included two that could feasibly date to as early as the late seventh and late eighth centuries.²¹ These burials may therefore be associated with a church occupying the site prior to the foundation of the nunnery by Edward the Elder.²² Amidst the numerous burial sites found within the limits of Middle Anglo-Saxon *Hamwic* (Figure 43), dating from both before and after the inception of the trading centre, two burials were excavated in Chapel Road, just to the south of the current extent of St Mary's churchyard, in 1994.²³ The inhumations were radiocarbon dated to AD 676–895 and 769–883, and may represent part of a cemetery attached to this church. A single human skeleton, dated to the mid–late seventh century, has also been found approximately 70m north-north-east of the church.²⁴ A further possible early chapel was located during excavations in 1973 on Marine Parade, to the east, close to the pre-modern shoreline, in association with a cemetery of at least eighty-one inhumations.²⁵ The burials lay either side of a trench and posthole structure suggestive of a double-celled church, potentially making this one of the earliest excavated early medieval churchyards in Wessex.²⁶ Grave-goods were found with only two of the burials – a knife with one, and an iron object with another – although unstratified items, such as two other knives and part of a chatelaine, may also be regarded as originating from graves. All were aligned east–west, and only one showed signs of having contained a coffin. Four of the skeletons were radiocarbon dated in 2003, confirming that the cemetery was of Middle Anglo-Saxon foundation and was in use between the late seventh and ninth centuries.²⁷ One of the lower-level skeletons, however, produced a mid-sixth- to mid-seventh-century date, which, if correct, may imply that an earlier field cemetery occupied the site

¹⁸ Hase 1988, 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁰ Kjølbye-Biddle 1992, 222; Kjølbye-Biddle and Biddle forthcoming.

²¹ Scott 1996; Cherryson 2005b, 62. Charcoal beds upon which the burials lay produced radiocarbon dates of AD 680–1000 and 790–1170, at 95.4 per cent probability.

²² Collier 1991.

²³ Smith 1995; 'Southampton SOU 630' in the Appendix.

²⁴ Garner and Elliott 2009; 'Southampton SOU 1484' in the Appendix.

²⁵ Morton 1992a, 121; 'Southampton SOU 13' in the Appendix.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123, 136; Cherryson 2010, 60.

²⁷ Cherryson 2005a, 279.

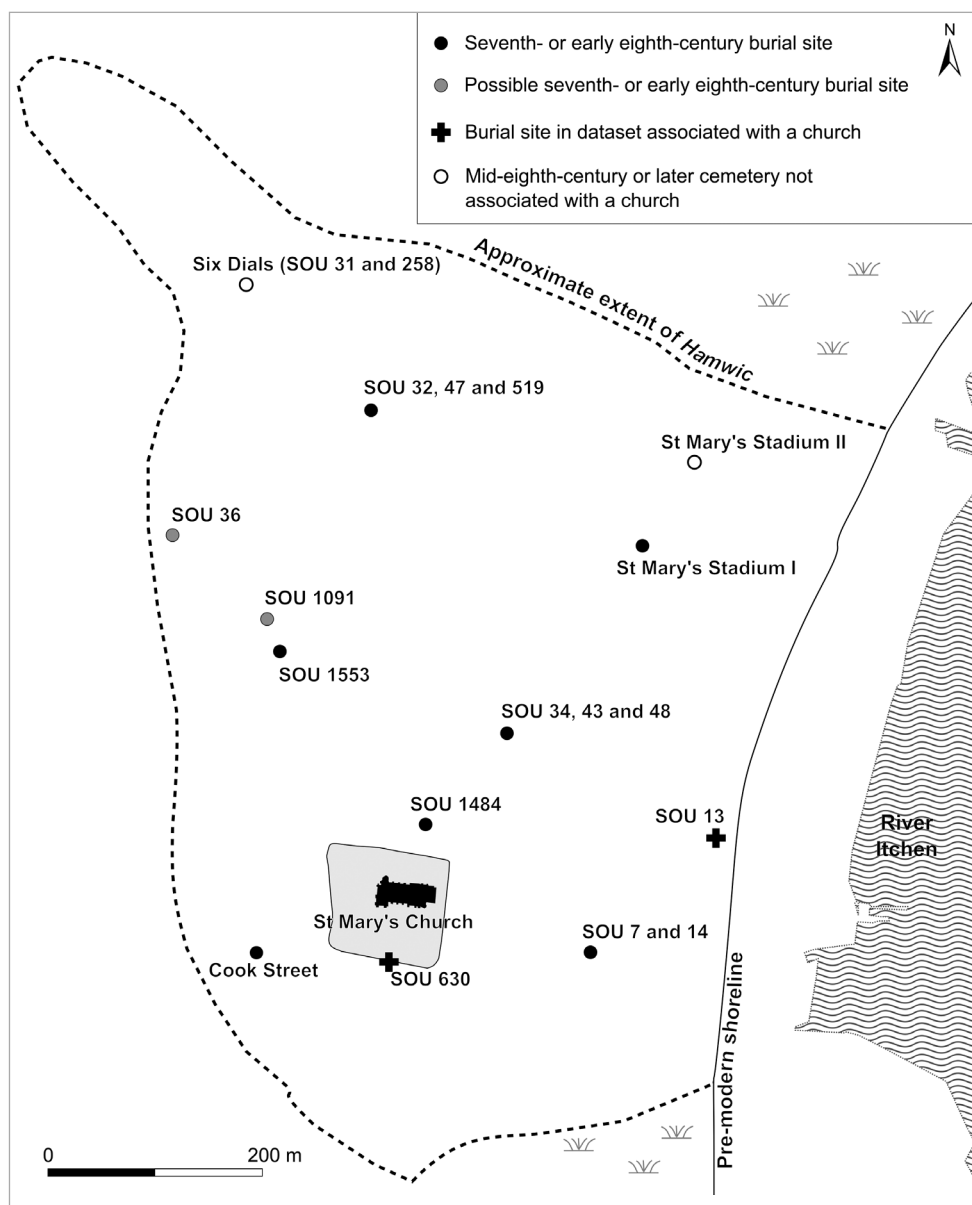


Figure 43. Approximate outline of *Hamwic*, showing the locations of certain and probable early medieval burial sites and possible early churchyards (after Birbeck 2005; Morton 1992b).

prior to the construction of the church.²⁸

²⁸ Ibid., 279.

Wiltshire

In Wiltshire, too, Jonathan Pitt has noted a strong correlation between parochial and hundredal organisation, but argues that in many cases this may be a product of the Late Anglo-Saxon reorganisation of both ecclesiastical and hundredal arrangements rather than proof of the antiquity or long-term stability of either system.²⁹ In a sense, the arrangement could be considered too regular to justifiably reflect the preservation of an early system of organisation. A demonstrably close relationship can, nevertheless, be detected between some of the earliest churches and the more long-standing and stable administrative units. Two such early foundations are situated in the north and west of the county. Malmesbury, arguably the most important church in Wiltshire by the time of the Conquest, also looks to have been the earliest monastic foundation in the county. Although its exact origins are obscure, its apparent connection with the Irish monk Maildub, who died c. AD 675, giving rise to the appointment of his former pupil Aldhelm as its first abbot, suggests a mid-late seventh-century date for its foundation.³⁰ William of Malmesbury also reports that Aldhelm founded a monastery at Bradford-on-Avon soon after, in the seventh or early eighth century. There is also firm evidence to suggest that a religious community (a monastery or perhaps 'family minster') was established at an early date on a probable royal estate at Tisbury, in the South Wiltshire Downs: a charter of AD 759 not only records the granting of land at Fontmell to this community but also makes it clear that a minster already existed there by the late seventh century.³¹ The Life of St Boniface, written before AD 769, also makes explicit reference to the presence of a minster at Tisbury.³²

Located close to the source of the River Nadder, Tisbury is overlooked to the south by the ridge upon which lies the site of the isolated, high-status seventh-century female burial at Swallowcliffe Down. It may be of significance that this burial was placed on the side of the ridge that faces towards the Nadder valley, close to the periphery of, but within, the hundred of Dunworth (in which Tisbury stood). While we cannot be certain that Ansty and Swallowcliffe were ecclesiastically subject to Tisbury at the time, or indeed whether Tisbury was a hundred minster, the evidence suggests that this was the case.³³ As Blair has noted, the woman interred at Swallowcliffe is of a similar age and status to the earliest noble abbesses,³⁴ although it is not known, of course, whether she belonged to a religious community (see below). Petts has previously posited that elite women of possible Christian identity, unlike their male counterparts, tended to be buried outside of ecclesiastical centres in the seventh century, and that burial rites were defined by gender rather than labels such as 'secular' or 'ecclesiastical'.³⁵ A similar relationship to a hundred boundary and minster can be observed in the case of the female

²⁹ Pitt 1999.

³⁰ GP V, 333–5.

³¹ S1256; Pitt 1999, 50.

³² Whitelock 1979, 778–82.

³³ Pitt 1999, 52–6.

³⁴ Blair 2005, 230.

³⁵ Petts 2011, 107–8.

burial at Roundway Hill 7. The group of burial sites at Roundway are situated on a plateau above Bishops Cannings, which sits in the valley to the east, close to the source of the Salisbury Avon. Post-Conquest documentary evidence suggests that Bishops Cannings may have been a minster.³⁶ The estates of Bishops Cannings and All Cannings together are conjectured to preserve the extent of the folk territory of the *Canningas* 'people of *Cana*'.³⁷

Not all isolated high-status female burials are to be found in elevated locations, however, and one example on the south-western periphery of the South Wiltshire Downs is situated in intriguingly close proximity to a church. The village of Mere lies at the source of the Shreen Water, a tributary of the River Stour, in a similar topographic position to that of Tisbury. Here, in 1995, a single burial was excavated just under 200m to the east of St Michael's Church.³⁸ The supine inhumation was orientated with the head to the west and was accompanied by grave-goods including a gold bracteate, two pendants, one with an inset garnet (similar to those found with the Roundway Hill 7 burial), and four glass beads. The grave-goods are indicative of a high-status seventh-century female burial. Part of a left mandible belonging to a second individual was found in 2007, perhaps suggesting the presence of a cemetery. Although there is no unequivocal evidence for a minster at Mere, Pitt has demonstrated that it has 'good evidence for superior status', some of which is 'early enough to suggest that both church and status date from the Saxon period'.³⁹ The D-shaped outline of a possible early ecclesiastical enclosure or minster precinct, fossilised in the street and field plan, can be identified. The burial site and the church both lie within this postulated enclosure, while just to the south of it a hoard of Roman denarii was found in 1856.⁴⁰ Although it is tempting to associate the burial with an early religious community at Mere, the grave-goods accompanying the individual interred here demonstrate no explicit Christian symbolism, and it would be unwise to attempt to assign her to a particular religious faith.

One further possible example of an early churchyard cemetery in Wiltshire is at Calne in the Corallian–Gault–Greensand belt, 5km north of Roundway Hill. In the late 1990s, part of a west–east burial associated with fifth- to seventh-century deposits was excavated in Church Street, adjacent to the churchyard of St Mary's.⁴¹ Though no explicit early references to a minster have been forthcoming, Calne's church is recorded as having not inconsiderable wealth and status at Domesday, and place-name evidence in the surrounding hundred supports the existence of an extensive Anglo-Saxon royal estate.⁴² If the church is, as Haslam has proposed,⁴³ of late seventh- or early eighth-century foundation, the burial may be associated with either the early church or a precursor to it.

³⁶ Pitt 1999, 88.

³⁷ Gover *et al.* 1939, 250; Draper 2006, 57.

³⁸ Wessex Archaeology 1995.

³⁹ Pitt 1999, 59.

⁴⁰ Wiltshire and Swindon HER ST83SW301.

⁴¹ Fielden 1998, 154; McMahon 1997.

⁴² Draper 2006, 66.

⁴³ Haslam 1984, 103.

Western Wessex: Dorset and Somerset

Further west in the region – in areas that were subsumed by Wessex after the core area had nominally converted to Christianity – the picture is somewhat different to that seen further east. Evidence for (Romano-)British inheritance is far more substantive, with some of the most significant Anglo-Saxon churches, such as Wells and Exeter, shown to have earlier roots.⁴⁴ It is thought that the West Saxon elite remoulded the British Church in newly acquired lands to promote control and to suit the emergent society, resulting in an altered structure for the Church in western Wessex, but one that used existing religious communities ‘where that was advantageous or necessary’.⁴⁵

At Wareham in east Dorset, five inscribed Romano-British architectural fragments, probably from a nearby villa, were discovered during the restoration of St Mary’s Church in 1841–2. The Brittonic inscriptions have been tentatively dated to between the seventh and ninth centuries, and may derive from a precursor burial ground to the minster that was in existence by the end of the eighth century.⁴⁶ Barbara Yorke has argued that the memorial stones bear the names of ‘prominent British Christians’, commemorated in a ‘traditional British manner after the official conquest of the area by “Anglo-Saxons”’, and are another indication of the survival of a dominant ‘Celtic’ culture in the area. While Teresa Hall has suggested that the inclusion of the stones within the make-up of the church indicates a disregard by Anglo-Saxon church builders for the individuals commemorated,⁴⁷ their preservation *in situ* could equally imply the opposite. Even if the act does not explicitly suggest an ‘overwriting’ of past traditions, a tangible sense of appropriation is evident.

The work of Teresa Hall on reconstructing the pattern of minsters and their *parochiae* in Dorset has revealed a comparative lack of correspondence with hundreds, which is argued to be indicative of a considerable degree of estate and hundredal reorganisation in the Late Anglo-Saxon period.⁴⁸ Only certain areas of the county’s landscape, in Hall’s view, were demarcated by *parochiae*, the layout of which correlates markedly with major topographical features such as hillforts. Hall refutes, meanwhile, the previously asserted link between Roman villas and high-status churches.

One example of a Domesday hundred that does appear to match closely with the likely *parochia* of its church is Sherborne, in the Blackmore Vale. The purported British origins of the important early medieval religious centre at Sherborne are of particular interest. Made an episcopal seat in AD 705 to administer the West Saxon territories west of Selwood, Sherborne became one of the most important ecclesiastical centres in Wessex, of which Aldhelm was the first bishop.⁴⁹ Barker has argued that ‘early Sherborne cannot be seen merely as a place and a parish with an

⁴⁴ Yorke 1995, 177.

⁴⁵ Costen 2011, 185.

⁴⁶ Hinton 1992b; Yorke 1995, 69–70; Hall 2000, 13.

⁴⁷ Hall 2000, 13.

⁴⁸ Hall 2000.

⁴⁹ Keen 1984, 208; Hall 2000, 11.

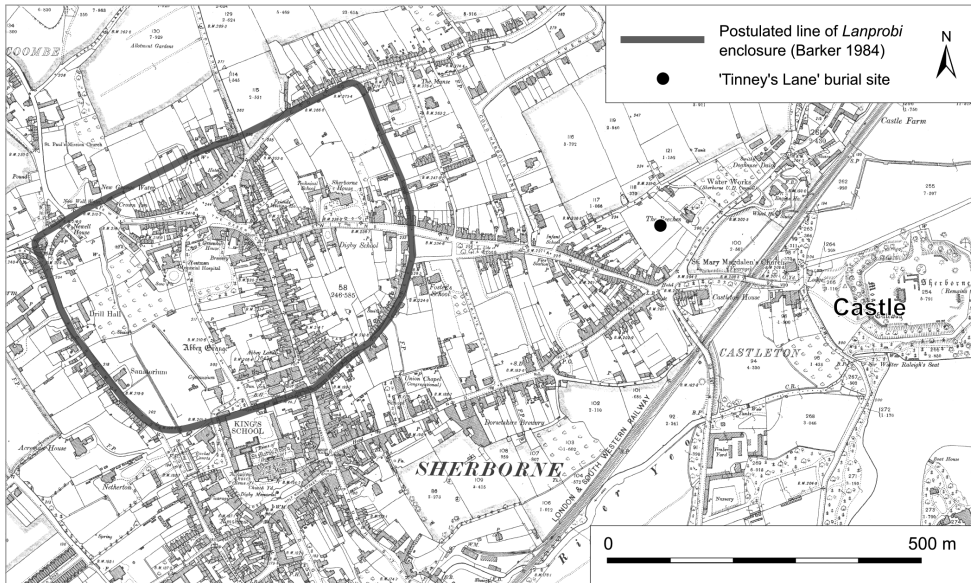


Figure 44. Map of Sherborne, showing the potential site of *Lanprobi*, the Old Castle, and Tinney's Lane burial site. (1903 OS map © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2018). All rights reserved)

episcopal connection, but as an institution of which the bishopric was an outward expression, part of an established ecclesiastical order'.⁵⁰ It had not been a Roman town, unlike nearby Ilchester, although this was not necessarily a prerequisite for the appointment of *sedes episcopales* in the eighth and ninth centuries.⁵¹ A grant of 'a hundred hides of *Lanprobi*' was made by Cenwalh in AD 671, possibly for the establishment of a new cathedral, and it has been proposed that *Lanprobi* represented the site of an already established British church and Christian enclave at Sherborne. The place-name is thought to combine the element *llan* or *lann* – a common prefix in Cornwall and Wales meaning a cleared space or enclosure, in some cases containing a chapel or church – with the name of St Probus of Cornwall.⁵² The footprint of a D-shaped enclosure has been identified in the centre of the town, which may be a likely candidate for *Lanprobi* as it 'corresponds closely to members of a class of planned ecclesiastical settlement of a type at present best exemplified in Ireland' (Figure 44).⁵³ More recent research, however, places the site of *Lanprobi* at the Old Castle as, it is argued, the rectilinear formation of Sherborne's streets suggests a planned layout, built afresh at a distance from the monastery.⁵⁴

Excavations were carried out in 1997 by Wessex Archaeology in advance of housing development in Tinney's Lane on the eastern side of Sherborne, c. 400m

⁵⁰ Barker 1984, 5.

⁵¹ Keen 1984.

⁵² Baring-Gould and Fisher 1913, 107; Finberg 1964; Barker 1977, 127; 1984; Keen 1984, 210; O'Donovan 1988. Cf. Turner 2006, 7–11.

⁵³ Barker 1984, 4.

⁵⁴ Hall 2000, 53.

east of the postulated line of the monastic enclosure. This multi-period site yielded four unaccompanied inhumations, one of which – the north–south orientated crouched burial of a female in her thirties – was radiocarbon dated to AD 430–660.⁵⁵ The four graves were located close to each other and were of a similar form, initially suggesting contemporaneity. However, another crouched burial in Grave 125, 6m to the west of the early medieval burial, produced a calibrated radiocarbon date of 370 BC–AD 10, placing it in the Middle to Late Iron Age. Crouched burial is indeed common in the Iron Age of south-west England, while in Early Anglo-Saxon contexts it is regarded as a less common but nevertheless widespread rite.⁵⁶ The close proximity of the early medieval burial to the Iron Age grave and to the other two burials, as well as the lack of intercutting, suggests that the graves were marked in some way. It is possible that members of the early medieval individual's family or community were making a statement of 'British' identity by burying their dead close to their ancestors, although this is only conjecture.

No documentary evidence survives for churchyard burial in western Wessex prior to the establishment of the West Saxon Church, and archaeological evidence is fragmentary, even into the seventh century.⁵⁷ While possible early Christian structures have been identified in association with a handful of burial sites in Somerset (see Chapter 2), the practice of burial in 'churchyards' – at least in a form similar to that recognised in later contexts – in fifth- to seventh-century Somerset and Dorset seems likely to have been far from the norm. Indeed, Cherryson has cautioned that we would perhaps be mistaken to expect this to have been the case.⁵⁸ Evidence from the Isle of Purbeck in particular demonstrates that 'sub-Roman' cemeteries, interpreted as Christian field cemeteries, could apparently exist entirely separately from churches during the period of study.⁵⁹ In some cemeteries, such as Cannington, shrine-line burials described as 'special graves' instead appear to have acted as nuclei and focal points for burial grounds.

One intriguing possible exception, brought into sharper focus by recent investigations, is Beckery Chapel, situated just under 2km west-south-west of Glastonbury Abbey. Beckery is situated on a low hillock, once part of the same island as the Tor, to which it is connected by Wearyall Hill – a long, narrow ridge that projects out into the surrounding marshes. Excavations led by Philip Rahtz in 1967–8 revealed the inhumations of at least sixty individuals in west–east orientated graves, together with structures including timber buildings thought to be associated with the burials and a later stone-built chapel which overlay them.⁶⁰ Despite the fact that the site had long been suspected to have earlier origins, no evidence could be found for activity prior to the Middle Anglo-Saxon period. However, a further programme of investigation undertaken in 2016 has, with the acquisition of seven new radiocarbon dates, now pushed back the first phase of burial into the fifth or early

⁵⁵ McKinley 1999a.

⁵⁶ Whimster 1981; Reynolds 2009, 63.

⁵⁷ Cherryson 2005a, 205.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 208; Turner 2006, 134.

⁶⁰ Rahtz and Hirst 1974.

sixth century.⁶¹ Reanalysis of the human remains confirmed the identification of thirty-seven adult males, two adolescents (possibly novice monks) and one female (interpreted as a visitor or patron). While it would be prudent to await full publication of the results of the latest work before drawing any firm conclusions, on the basis of the evidence – namely, the predominantly male cemetery population, the potentially contemporary structures and the revised chronology of the burials – it is possible to tentatively suggest that this burial ground was associated with an early monastic community. If this is the case, it would predate the first evidence for a religious function at Glastonbury Abbey by a century or more.

Chronology, conversion and the 'Final Phase'

The long-held belief that the practice of burial with grave-goods was unequivocally linked with 'paganism' was first questioned by T. C. Lethbridge as a result of his excavations at Burwell and Shudy Camps (Cambridgeshire) and Holywell Row (Suffolk) in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁶² Lethbridge contended that there must have been a transitional phase, during which Christian cemeteries were being created while certain traditional burial rites still lingered. The term 'Final Phase' was coined in the 1930s by E. T. Leeds, initially to define cemeteries, such as those identified by Lethbridge, founded *de novo* from around the middle of the seventh century and abandoned during the following century.⁶³ Leeds was, however, more inclined to believe that these burial grounds represented the final throes of 'pagan' burial rather than the first 'Christian' cemeteries. Such sites were often found in close proximity to a precursor burial ground; hence the 'two-cemetery model', introduced in the 1960s by Miranda Hyslop in her analysis of a pair of cemeteries at Chamberlains Barn, Leighton Buzzard (Bedfordshire).⁶⁴ Comparable pairs of burial sites have also been identified in Hampshire, at Winnall I and II and Portway East and West,⁶⁵ though such patterning is far from ubiquitous. Another key identifying feature of these so-called 'Final Phase' cemeteries was the relative paucity of grave-goods, with utilitarian items most common, as well as more 'refined' styles of jewellery in comparison with sixth-century assemblages.⁶⁶

The fact that the founding of these new cemeteries coincides with the conversion, at least nominally, of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to Christianity – coupled with the decline of supposedly 'pagan' customs of cremation and well-furnished burial, and a more consistent uniformity of west-east grave orientation (Figure 45) – has unsurprisingly provoked religious explanations for their appearance.⁶⁷ Yet in a review of the 'Final Phase' model published in 1990, Andy Boddington expressed scepticism that Christianity was the sole or even primary factor for the

⁶¹ Brunning 2016. The earliest date obtained falls between AD 405 and 544.

⁶² Lethbridge 1931; 1936.

⁶³ Leeds 1936.

⁶⁴ Hyslop 1963.

⁶⁵ Cook and Dacre 1985; Stoodley 2006.

⁶⁶ Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 45; Geake 1997.

⁶⁷ Lethbridge 1931; 1936; Hyslop 1963.

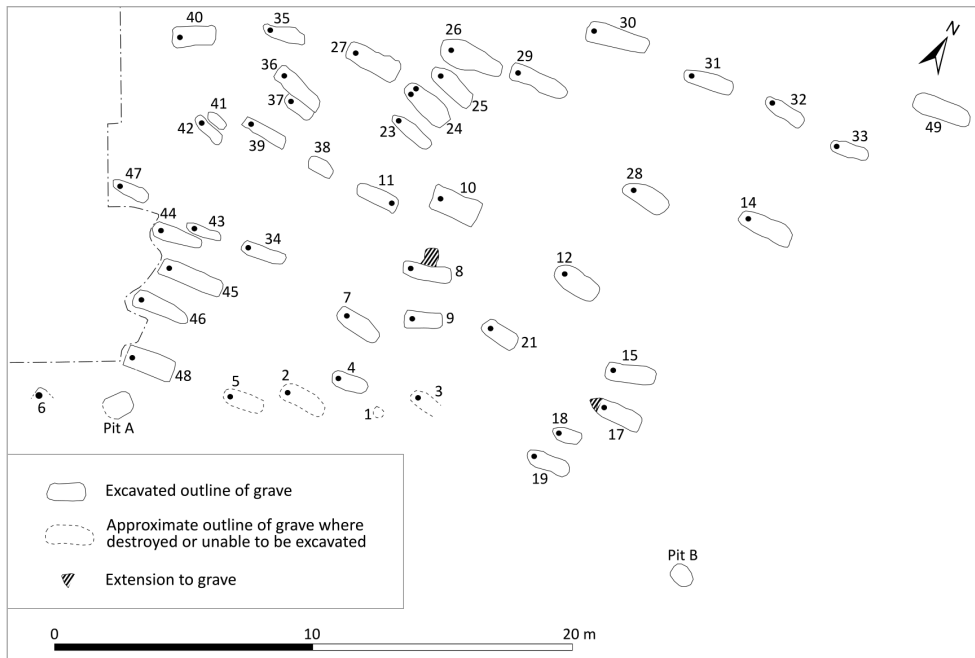


Figure 45. Plan of Winnall II cemetery, Hampshire (redrawn after Meaney and Hawkes 1970, figure 5).

emergence of these new funerary sites, or even that they should be treated as particularly remarkable, given that burial grounds had been continually founded and abandoned in earlier periods too.⁶⁸ Boddington argued that their establishment was due to a wider range of landscape pressures and economic, social and religious transformations at this time. The forces driving this trajectory of changing attitudes and practices were subsequently explored in greater depth by Helen Geake, who situated and contextualised this phase of burial within a more protracted 'Conversion Period', linking it to major societal and cultural realignments taking place in continental Europe, with which Anglo-Saxon England was increasingly closely aligned.⁶⁹

The 'Final Phase' model is revealed as all the more equivocal and contradictory when we consider that it encompasses the emergence of both the aforementioned cemeteries and the highly distinct phenomenon of richly furnished, often isolated, burials – which, on the face of it, contrast markedly with the cemeteries.⁷⁰ When juxtaposed with the cemeteries, these burials with prestige goods, though relatively rare, imply an increasingly polarised character of grave wealth. The complexity of this period should not be underestimated. In terms of the chronological context of furnished burial, the precedent is now set by the results and analyses, published in 2013, of a pioneering programme of high-precision radiocarbon dating, further

⁶⁸ Boddington 1990.

⁶⁹ Geake 1997.

⁷⁰ Crawford 2004, 91.

refined by statistical modelling.⁷¹ New phasing of both individual burials and cemeteries has now made it possible to get a real handle on the chronology of this period, while raising new questions and reigniting the debate about the role of the Church in changing burial practices in the seventh century. With this improved understanding of the chronology, and with a new system of reference at our disposal, it is now clear that the 'Final Phase', as a model and as a label, should be disregarded and viewed as obsolete.

The richly furnished burials of this period can be seen to have their origins in the later sixth- to very early seventh-century high-status male graves, most remarkable among which are the so-called 'princely (or even 'kingly') graves', linked by many to the emergence of royal dynasties.⁷² While no sites that can be considered truly comparable with burials such as that of the 'Prittlewell prince' (Essex) have been discovered in the area of study, one example belonging to the same chronological phase as the Prittlewell burial (Hines and Bayliss's Phase AS-MD),⁷³ which might be classified as 'sub-princely', is that found at Coombe Bissett (Salisbury Racecourse) in the South Wiltshire Downs. On a small hill at the eastern end of the Ebble–Nadder ridge four now indiscernible barrows were opened by Cunnington in 1803.⁷⁴ In one of them, Coombe Bissett I, he found an exceptionally well-furnished 'grave' apparently devoid of human remains. The extensive inventory of finds included a sword in the remains of a wooden scabbard; two garnet- and shell-set bronze pyramidal sword studs; three spearheads, including types SP1-a2 and SP2-a1b2;⁷⁵ a shield with studs and a type SB4-b2 shield boss;⁷⁶ one gold and five silver wire slip rings; a gilded bronze skillet; a wooden vessel; a palm cup; and a cone-beaker. The absence of prehistoric material, as well as Cunnington's observation that the mound appeared to have been erected after the pit was made, suggest the barrow was of primary construction.⁷⁷ The soils produced by the weathering of White Chalk bedrock generally afford a high degree of skeletal preservation, and the bone is unlikely to have decayed. One explanation that has been suggested is that the mound represents the 'pagan' memorial to an individual who had been afforded a Christian burial in the ecclesiastical centre of Wilton, 3km to the north.⁷⁸ The assemblage does, however, either precede or date to a very early stage in the conversion of Wessex. Alternatively, it is possible that the body was exhumed and moved to an ecclesiastical burial ground at a later date – something that is impossible to verify from the surviving antiquarian account.

A few decades subsequent to this most ostentatious phase of male burial we can now place the emergence of a category of comparatively less well-furnished but nonetheless 'elite' male burials – often at newly founded funerary sites and frequently within barrows – in the concluding phase of the male sequence (Hines and

⁷¹ Hines and Bayliss 2013.

⁷² E.g. Carver 2005.

⁷³ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 485, 530–1.

⁷⁴ Hoare 1821b, 26–7.

⁷⁵ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 167, 172.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁷ Bonney 1966, 29.

⁷⁸ Musty 1969, 113.

Bayliss's Phase AS-MF).⁷⁹ A cluster of burials of this type – Ford II, Alvediston and Rodmead Hill – is identifiable in the South Wiltshire Downs. The accompanying assemblages are not as lavish as the earlier ones, though consistently with weaponry, and monumentality itself a powerful statement.⁸⁰

In parallel with, but following a significantly different trajectory to, the last two phases of male burial with grave-goods are the final phases of female furnished burial. The high-status, often isolated, female burials can be assigned with confidence to Hines and Bayliss's AS-FD to AS-FE sequences (Swallowcliffe Down to the end of AS-FD; others, such as Roundway Hill 7, to AS-FE). The dramatic florescence of this genre of female burial is contemporary with the waning of the most lavish male burials, and a distinct surge can be identified around AD 660, before terminating concurrently with furnished burial as a whole c. AD 685.⁸¹ The assemblages that accompany these burials are characterised by their distinctive repertoire of jewellery sets – which incorporate exotic materials such as garnets and cowrie shells, and are evocative of Frankish, Mediterranean or Byzantine influences – as well as enigmatic collections of concealed, perhaps 'amuletic', objects in bags or work-boxes. Many items even bore cruciform designs, though their potential religious significance is ambiguous. The investment in these materials, as well as the monumentality often associated with the graves, indicates that these women belonged to the upper echelons of society.

The nature of these burials might, then, seem at odds with the increasingly established Christian orthodoxy. Yet esoteric cultic practices incorporated into funerary rites during this period do not necessarily denote 'pagan survivals'; rather, they can be seen as an integral feature of the initial phase of early medieval Christianity, a key characteristic of which was hybridity and syncretism.⁸² This concluding phase of furnished burial embodies these composite beliefs, of which women seem to have been the literal bearers, charged with embodying and materialising new traditions.

The processes that hastened the ultimate end of furnished burial are complex.⁸³ Despite the fact that the deposition of grave-goods continued on the continent long after conversion, the most dramatic changes can be seen to occur within Christianised communities in England during the last quarter of the seventh century. The date of the apparently abrupt termination of this practice has led it to be tentatively linked with the reforming ministry of Theodore of Tarsus, who arrived in England as the newly appointed archbishop of Canterbury in AD 669; it is not unfeasible that this was by direct decree, owing to an increased concern with the 'correct' form of Christian burial.⁸⁴ In any event, it is now resolutely back on the agenda that we should see the Church as a major driver of changing burial practices in the latter part of the seventh century, even if the initial period of conversion did not bring about the immediate end of furnished burial.

⁷⁹ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 533–6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 535–6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 539–40; Hamerow 2016, 424–5.

⁸² Blair 2005; Gilchrist 2008.

⁸³ Cf. Hines and Bayliss 2013, 548–54.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 553.

The Church, landholding and elite burial

From the middle part of the seventh century, as religious communities were rapidly being established by royal authorities throughout England, the Church increasingly became the primary medium for elite investment. This was linked with fundamental transformations in the character of royal power. The diverse package of cultural imports associated with the Augustinian Church offered a more permanent means of consolidating power than martial authority, a need that became apparent from the early seventh century.⁸⁵ That is not to say that martial authority and order were not still important elements in society, but perhaps that these aspects were increasingly bound up with land ownership. By the later seventh century, if not earlier, an integral element of societal structure was the system of *fyrð-bote* or universal military service, essentially a form of taxation.⁸⁶ A close relationship between military service and land tenure is apparent in the Laws of Ine:

Gif gesiðcund mon landagende forsitte fierd, geselle CXX scill. and ðolie his landes; unlandagende LX scill.

If a nobleman who holds land neglects military service, he shall pay 120 shillings and forfeit his land; a nobleman who holds no land shall pay 60 shillings.⁸⁷ The confiscation of land was thus a way of enforcing *fyrð* attendance which a fine might have failed to effect.⁸⁸ Reynolds has suggested that an individual buried in a possible wooden coffin on the boundary between two Domesday manors at Netheravon Airfield I, Figcheldean, on Salisbury Plain, might represent a dispossessed thegn or *gesið*,⁸⁹ and it could be speculated that the individual forfeited his land by neglecting the *fyrð*. At this site, located 500m east of the River Avon on the south-facing slope of a spur, the single inhumation burial of a 'young person', with the head to the west, was found at a depth of 1.2m below existing ground level in October 1938.⁹⁰ The only finds were twenty-one iron nails with wood adhering to them and a piece of iron, perhaps indicating the former presence of a wooden coffin. Cunnington remarked on the likelihood that a small barrow originally covered the grave, 'similar to that opened on King's Play Down, Heddington'. Although the site is not on a parish boundary, it did lie on the boundary between two Domesday manors, Choulston and Figcheldean.⁹¹ A routeway marked on the first edition OS map – probably an ancient local droveway leading up onto the downs – does, however, follow the same course as this boundary and is thus likely to predate it. The drove-side location, coupled with the possible former presence of a covering mound, suggests that conspicuous display or the control of resources were important considerations. Moreover, another isolated individual burial (or

⁸⁵ Wright 2015a.

⁸⁶ Adams 2004, 117.

⁸⁷ Attenborough 1922, 52–3.

⁸⁸ Adams 2004, 118.

⁸⁹ Reynolds 2009, 212.

⁹⁰ Cunnington 1939.

⁹¹ Bonney 1976, 76–8; Crowley 1995, 106–10.

possibly a pair of burials) has been found in an almost identical position 350m to the north-west, at Netheravon Airfield II. Burials of this type on routeways and/or boundaries are consistent with changes in society and landholding during the seventh century.

In the last three decades of the seventh century, kings began to grant *bocland* – land held in perpetuity with the support of a written charter – to noble families for the purpose of ecclesiastical foundation. The inalienable right to land, as well as the exemption from *fyrð-bote* that *bocland* provided, led to the exploitation of the system by nobles who acquired land and benefits under the false pretences of founding minsters.⁹² It is probable, however, that many of the grants merely formalised and added permanence to the tenure of land already held by prominent kin groups.⁹³ The new stability afforded by *bocland* prompted an upsurge of elite investment in the landscape,⁹⁴ and the exertion of an ‘increasingly firm grip ... by local aristocrats on the land and the people who worked it’.⁹⁵ Although this period was generally characterised by an overall decline in investment in grave-goods, the final phase of furnished burial among the elite classes was intrinsically linked with this renewed interest in the rural landscape. Barrow burials, both intrusive and primary, were a key part of this.

It is eminently plausible that among the high-status individuals – both male and (particularly) female – buried in barrows in the seventh century were baptised Christians.⁹⁶ In that case, why did mourners choose to forego burying their dead within minster foundations, instead preferring relatively remote, elevated locations on watersheds or alongside routeways? As Barbara Yorke has stressed, it was only in the AD 680s or 690s that female religious communities became visible in the written record and the West Saxon royal house began to move from a superficial phase of adoption of Christianity, allowing it to be more fully absorbed into the fabric of their lives. For the English royalty and nobility, there were a number of obstacles to overcome before churchyard burial, and indeed the Roman Church in general, could be wholly accepted. As well as more general misgivings over submission to centralised authority, there are compelling reasons why, even after baptism, they would elect to ‘retain traditional modes of burial’ elsewhere in the landscape.⁹⁷ As previously mentioned, ‘ancestral’ barrow burials were thought to both mark and protect the boundaries of family land; thus, being ‘relegated to the graveyards of churches’ also meant losing their power to ‘defend the land which they left to their heirs’ during a crucial stage in the process of territorial formation.⁹⁸ The reuse of earlier monuments in this period was not, however, necessarily wholly concerned with ‘ancestry’; rather, it could be argued that the tradition was in a sense ‘forward looking’ and linked with aspirations regarding landholding and the ‘overwriting’ of the past.⁹⁹ Such ambitions ultimately came to fruition in

⁹² Blair 2005, 101.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 104

⁹⁴ Rippon 2010, 62.

⁹⁵ Hamerow 2002, 193

⁹⁶ E.g. Yorke 1995, 175; Blair 2005, 230–1; Petts 2011.

⁹⁷ Blair 2005, 59.

⁹⁸ Charles-Edwards 1976, 86; O’Brien 1999.

⁹⁹ Halsall 2010.

the 'long eighth century' with the attainment by the nobility of inalienable rights to land.

Perhaps the most acceptable form of Christianity among the elite classes was monasticism, owing to its compatibility with kin-based society and its amenability to incorporation into existing noble households.¹⁰⁰ The area of study, in particular, is part of a central zone in which substantial interaction between the British Church – already characterised by a strong monastic element – and the emerging English Church took place.¹⁰¹ There was an upsurge in monastic patronage and, at least nominally, Christian piety among the aristocracy during the latter half of the seventh century. Indeed, as Yorke has observed, 'active personal involvement of royalty in monasticism seems to have been initiated by kings themselves', with two recorded instances of abdication (Cædwalla and Centwine) on the grounds of pilgrimage or retirement to monastic life.¹⁰² Cult status was reached by heroic ascetic figures such as Guthlac and his sister Pega, who were members of the Mercian royal family.¹⁰³ Much of this outward display of religious devotion is likely to have been founded in political strategy by noble families themselves, and in religious propaganda by contemporary chroniclers. The hagiographic *vitae* of the early eighth century were designed to legitimate the 'ancient sanctity of monastic houses', which were inexorably linked with noble houses.¹⁰⁴

An important phase in the development of Anglo-Saxon religious institutions is characterised by the spread of the 'double house' – a mixed community of monks or priests and nuns within a single institution, with a nucleus of nuns under the control of a noble or royal abbess. Such communities are well attested in the English kingdoms by the third quarter of the seventh century, materialising at an earlier date in Kent than in Wessex, stimulated by similar foundations in Francia. The first of numerous royal nunneries to emerge in Wessex between the mid-seventh and early eighth centuries was apparently founded by Bugga, the daughter of King Centwine, although its precise location is not known.¹⁰⁵ A dedication poem for her church is known to have been written by Aldhelm during the reign of King Ine. For elite women, becoming 'brides of Christ' represented an attractive alternative to royal marriage, as well as an acceptable way of life for widowed queens, although it would of course be wrong to assume that women had a choice or any real agency in taking up such a role, given the potential benefits it afforded the political and territorial ambitions of royal men. At least up until the mid-tenth century, any land held by a woman would revert to her family upon her death; hence, if she became a nun and was granted an estate to support her during her lifetime, this estate would rejoin the 'family stocks' rather than becoming part of the nunnery's holdings.¹⁰⁶

The female burials on Swallowcliffe Down and Roundway Hill are probably coeval with an early phase of this monastic boom. Although it is unlikely that

¹⁰⁰ Blair 2005, 58.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰² Yorke 2003, 245.

¹⁰³ Colgrave 1956; Meaney 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Semple 2013, 137.

¹⁰⁵ Yorke 1998; 2003, 254.

¹⁰⁶ Yorke 1989a, 105–6.

the individuals were themselves abbesses, the burials perhaps drew upon certain motifs of the eremitic tradition. It could be conjectured that the barrow was considered an apt location for solitary contemplation, and that bed burial was redolent of 'taking up residence' in an anchoritic sense. Items found at Swallowcliffe, such as the liturgical sprinkler and the objects concealed within a box, may suggest the performance of special rituals,¹⁰⁷ and comparisons can be drawn with the bed burial of a young adult female with leprosy at Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire, also accompanied by a casket.¹⁰⁸ Women were the 'religious specialists' of royal households, and wielded considerable secular power based on mortuary cults.¹⁰⁹

It is possible that noble families sought to elevate their female representatives to cult status, and part of this process included burial in isolated yet accessible locations such as Swallowcliffe Down. Connection with the landscape was important, and hilltops may have held particular resonance for local populations.¹¹⁰ The deposition of a spearhead within the Swallowcliffe barrow may relate to the veneration of the site. As has been observed in previous studies,¹¹¹ isolated female burials in the area of study are found predominantly in earlier barrows, while individual burials within primary mounds tend to be male. To this we can add that male barrow burials are more likely than female secondary interments to be located adjacent to Roman roads (e.g. Coombe Bissett, Ford, Hinton Downs), rather than other categories of routeway. Drove ways were used by the general populace in everyday life, for trade and exchange and to access seasonal pasture. Burial sites adjacent to these routes may perhaps be compared to wayside shrines, as barrows containing revered female individuals were perhaps venerated by travellers.¹¹² Roman roads, conversely, were used by peripatetic kings and sub-kings to traverse their territories,¹¹³ although there is no reason why other sectors of society would not have continued to use these routes, too.

Changing perceptions of the past and funerary monumentality

Apparent engagements with concepts of 'ancestry' in the funerary record of Middle Anglo-Saxon Wessex might, in many respects, seem oblique and paradoxical. How do we, for example, reconcile fundamental changes in the placement of the dead in the late sixth and seventh centuries – the abandonment of established cemeteries for newly founded burial grounds, or the positioning of isolated graves in locations far removed from settlements and from the resting places of predecessors – with frequently espoused narratives of a concern with 'ancestral' places and individuals?¹¹⁴ Did such 'ancestral' links have any real substance, or were they purely a pretence? Clearly, there can have been no known connection to the original 'inhab-

¹⁰⁷ Geake 1992, 93; Petts 2011, 111.

¹⁰⁸ Malim and Hines 1998; Williams 2006, 101.

¹⁰⁹ Blair 2005, 85.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 144; Semple 2010, 27.

¹¹¹ E.g. Geake 1997; Semple 2013, 48.

¹¹² Everitt 1986, 186–7.

¹¹³ Brookes 2007b, 150; Semple 2013, 226.

¹¹⁴ E.g. Williams 1998a; Thäte 2007.

itant' or creator of a Bronze Age barrow, and indeed the precise antiquity of such a monument cannot have been recognised. The act of secondary burial within an ancient mound might suggest an interest in the distant past, but could equally be argued to reveal a fixation with the more recent past (emulating established local traditions) and indeed with posterity.¹¹⁵ It can perhaps be linked to preoccupations with the appropriation of newly acquired land by elite families who were beginning to amass *bocland* and who intended to retain it.

How time itself was perceived has important implications for the ways in which early medieval communities might have conceptualised the antecedent landscape. It has been argued that in pre-Christian and pre- or proto-historic agrarian societies, such as post-Roman Britain, notions of time were altogether different to the absolute, sequential systems of time within which modern Western societies function. Time is instead thought to have been conceived as cyclical, deeply embedded in seasonality, fertility and the celestial bodies.¹¹⁶ And, as Roy Liuzza has emphasised, 'relative and cyclical systems for counting years provide no framework for discussing the distant past'.¹¹⁷ This linear-cyclical dichotomy has, however, been strongly critiqued, and chronotypes are unlikely to have been quite this absolute.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, over the course of the fifth to ninth centuries – concurrent with fundamental societal changes allied with the spread of Augustinian Christianity, the advent of literacy and the coalescence of post-imperial polities into kingdoms – significant transformations are thought to have occurred, at least with regard to the *measurement* of time. Complex theological and technical debates about how units of time and points in the calendar year should be marked are set out by Bede in his *De temporum ratione*.¹¹⁹ From the late sixth and seventh centuries, the recording of genealogies and landholdings in perpetuity, in accordance with linear timescales, became central to the construction of elite power. A renewed interest in ancient sites was in equal measure stimulated by, and bound up with, these changes.¹²⁰ The emergence of any new dominant (religious) ideology generally entails investing remnants of the past order with new meanings, rather than erasing and replacing them wholesale. The Christian Church thus appropriated elements of the past into its very fabric in a multitude of ways.

Christian modes of burial in shrouds or coffins, in east-west graves within bounded churchyards, were not uniformly adopted across Wessex until the ninth or tenth centuries at the earliest. Concomitantly, there is clear evidence for the protracted use of barrow burial and interment in prominent places outside consecrated burial grounds, even into the tenth century. The cemetery focused on the Neolithic long barrow known as Bevis's Grave in south-east Hampshire, for example, produced radiocarbon dates that suggest the site continued in use until the late ninth century, if not later. This suggests a number of possible scenarios. Either it was the case that the Church did not exert any form of direct or deliberate control over

¹¹⁵ Halsall 2010, 75, 255.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Bradley 1987; Lucas 2005.

¹¹⁷ Liuzza 2013.

¹¹⁸ E.g. Bloch 1977; cf. Petts 2011, 81–3.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Wallis 1999.

¹²⁰ Semple 2013, 233.

burial practices, including with regard to the locations of cemeteries, until well into the Late Anglo-Saxon period;¹²¹ or, equally possibly, that barrow burial was not considered to be in opposition to early Christianity in any case. Alternatively, it is possible that individuals buried in such places were perceived as deviant in some way.

Evidence for cemeteries specifically designated for the burial of deviant or judicially executed individuals, which are commonly associated with antecedent features, largely postdates the temporal remit of this book. As previous studies have shown, increasingly negative perceptions of antecedent features from the eighth century onwards can be gleaned through documentary and archaeological evidence,¹²² and the appropriation of earthworks and megalithic monuments at execution cemeteries or isolated deviant burial sites can be seen as partly symptomatic of the influence of the Church upon attitudes towards pre-Christian sites. The endurance of barrow burial without any clear indications of deviancy does, however, suggest that such perceptions are unlikely to have become widespread among rural populations in Wessex until relatively late in the Middle Anglo-Saxon period.

An isolated burial at Stonehenge, Wiltshire, is the most plausible example of judicial execution to date from the period of study, and the lack of evidence for the appropriation of megalithic sites for 'conventional' burial supports the idea that superstitious beliefs might have surrounded such features during the period of study.¹²³ Here, a decapitated skeleton was excavated in 1923 by William Hawley within the 'henge' monument and to the north of a mound known as South Barrow. A man in his late twenties or early thirties was found to have been decapitated, probably by a single blow from the rear-right, and had been placed in a tight grave. Although the remains had been presumed lost throughout most of the twentieth century, they were rediscovered in 1999 and radiocarbon analysis conducted in 2001 produced a seventh-century date.¹²⁴ Subsequent retesting, however, gave a revised date of AD 660–890, which is more fitting for a 'deviant' interpretation.¹²⁵ Reynolds has speculated that the Stonehenge circles lay on the boundary between the hundreds of Wonderditch and Amesbury.¹²⁶ Yet the boundary between the parish of Amesbury and the tithing of Normanton – part of Wilsford parish but in Amesbury hundred – lay 800m to the south of Stonehenge.¹²⁷ The hundred boundary is therefore likely to have been sited 1.5km south of Stonehenge, following the boundary between Normanton and Durnford.

Prominent linear earthworks were also perhaps perceived as liminal places or thresholds, and as stark reminders of authority.¹²⁸ The tendency for execution sites to be situated at the limits of territories can be conceptualised in a similar way. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, boundaries or 'buffer zones' between territories are likely to have been characterised by wastes or agricultur-

¹²¹ Hadley 2004, 306; Blair 2005; but see Hines and Bayliss 2013, 549.

¹²² Notably, Reynolds, A. 1998; 2009; Semple 1998; 2013, 234–6.

¹²³ Semple 2003.

¹²⁴ Pitts *et al.* 2002.

¹²⁵ Hamilton *et al.* 2007.

¹²⁶ Reynolds 2009, 211.

¹²⁷ Crowley 1995.

¹²⁸ Williams 2006, 90.

ally marginal land, which is likely to have had practical implications for the siting of such cemeteries. The 'execution cemetery' on Roche Court Down, Wiltshire, is characterised both by the appropriation of linear earthworks and by a 'boundary' location, although the burials have not been securely dated and there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the individuals had been subject to formal execution. Old Dairy Cottage, Hampshire, is located adjacent to a Roman road, and its placement in a frequently traversed location was perhaps intended to act as an effective and visible deterrent against wrongdoing.¹²⁹ This site is also more likely to postdate the period of study, however, as indicated by radiocarbon dating and by the fact that comparable cemeteries nearby (Meon Hill and Stockbridge Down) were dated to the tenth or eleventh century.¹³⁰

Simon Draper has also suggested that some unaccompanied isolated burials in barrows on Salisbury Plain and the South Wiltshire Downs might be Late Anglo-Saxon execution victims.¹³¹ Yet deviant burials in barrows are generally rare.¹³² In the absence of firm evidence for execution, fifth- to eighth-century 'deviant' burials are equally likely to have alternative explanations, such as interpersonal violence or the continuation of the late Roman decapitation burial rite, which 'seems not to have had a judicial motivation but a religious one'.¹³³ That is not to say, however, that capital punishment did not take place in the period of study; the Laws of Ine, for example, explicitly refer to punishments for wrongdoing, including hanging and the severing of hands or feet. Moreover, early execution sites have been detected archaeologically in other areas of England.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Reynolds 2009.

¹³⁰ *Ibi-d.*, 116, 121.

¹³¹ Draper 2004.

¹³² Thäte 2007, 276.

¹³³ Philpott 1991; Reynolds, A. 1998, 229.

¹³⁴ Reynolds 2009.

Conclusions

This book set out to explore diachronically the relationship between places of funerary ritual and the antecedent landscape in Wessex, from the fifth century through to the end of the long eighth. It has interrogated why mourners selected particular locations, frequently harnessing both the natural topography and remnants of the past to provide structure and points of reference for burial practices. More broadly, it has sought to contextualise these mortuary choices within a trajectory of socio-political and landscape change, which took the region from a mosaic of small, kin-based, predominantly pastoral groups towards the territorial and political coherence of West Saxon society. It is undoubtedly through the archaeological evidence – and, explicitly, the burial record – rather than through the historical narratives that we are best placed to attempt to understand these shifting early political dynamics and the nebulous social order of the Early Anglo-Saxon period.¹ That said, a more rounded picture is to be gained by taking advantage of a full range of available evidence, drawing on complementary material such as place-names and documentary sources, and through an awareness of the environmental factors that contributed to shaping the character of settlement and burial and informed communities' worldviews and experiences of their surroundings.

Prehistoric and Roman remains were consciously selected as the foci for a great many funerary locales in early medieval Wessex: more than half of the corpus of burial sites in the study area were identified as having been cut into or placed within 50m of an ancient feature, while over 80 per cent were located within 300m of such a feature. There is, of course, nothing novel about the notion that early medieval communities reused and recycled elements of the ancient past in mortuary contexts. As research conducted at a national and micro-regional level by scholars such as Howard Williams and Sarah Semple has already revealed, monument reuse was a remarkably widespread and long-lived tradition. But through the close-scale, intensive and holistic approach taken by this regional study it is possible to offer new insights into the subtleties of interaction with different types of antecedent site and the cultural, topographic and taphonomic contexts of these practices.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, barrows represented nearly half of all earlier features appropriated for Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon burial in the study area. Prehistoric funerary mounds that possessed unusual morphological characteristics – so-called 'fancy barrows' – appear to have been preferentially selected in certain areas: bell barrows, for instance, were picked out on the ridges between the valleys in the eastern part of Salisbury Plain. Long barrows, meanwhile, were favoured in

¹ Hines and Bayliss 2013, 544; cf. Brookes 2007a, 182.

the western half of Wiltshire, on either side of the Wylve valley and close to the source of the Till. This was not, however, to the exclusion of more common bowl barrows, the reuse of which has been identified as comparatively evenly distributed throughout areas of Wiltshire in which these monuments survive. Indeed, a matter to be borne in mind is that it is by virtue of the disproportionate preservation and visibility of barrows on the Wiltshire downland and, accordingly, the prolific history of investigation, that we are able to conduct these kinds of analysis and identify these patterns. It can nevertheless be argued that sub-regional patterns in the appropriation of different types of antecedent monument do in many cases reflect localised preferences.

While the precise chronology is not wholly reliable, it can be stated with a degree of confidence that rural community cemeteries in the east of the study area were sited so as to incorporate barrows from as early as the fifth century; notable here are the pond barrows used as foci of activity at Winterbourne Gunner and Itchen Abbas. By the sixth century the evidence is yet more substantive, with the appearance of barrow-focused cemeteries at Barrow Clump and Breamore in the Salisbury Avon valley, and Storey's Meadow in the Meon valley. Several of the larger cemeteries continue in use into the seventh century, at the same time as additional examples emerge in the west (e.g. High Lea Farm) and in other peripheral areas such as south-east Hampshire (e.g. Snell's Corner). I have argued that these monuments, in the context of cemeteries, were exploited so as to add weight to territorial claims, to enhance the visual impact of funerary sites and to provide mnemonic cues for future events. The specific locations for these cemeteries were selected with a combination of factors in mind, however, and their proximity to nodal places and natural features was perhaps equally influential in many cases.

Contemporary land-use zones and patterns of movement and the creation and consolidation of group identities had a decisive influence on the location of community cemeteries; all of these aspects articulated together as part of an integrated landscape. The most fundamental resource at this time was the land, in terms of its pastoral and, increasingly, arable potential. As I have emphasised, postulated droveways had a strong influence on the locations both of boundaries – many of which were consolidated and formalised in the Middle to Late Anglo-Saxon period – and of burial sites, noticeably but not exclusively in the chalkland *pays*. Community cemeteries tended to be situated adjacent to short-distance droveways linking the valleys and the downland, reflecting the expression and perpetuation of group identities and the assertion of claims to land and resources, particularly pasture. Ancient monuments were incorporated in order to enhance and authenticate these assertions, to provide focal points for group assembly and identity reaffirmation, and to foster a sense of place. Existing barrows were a common though not universal choice in this context.

The emergence of isolated barrow burial from the late sixth century is strongly associated with the definition and consolidation of emerging or evolving territorial units, whether independent polities or sub-kingdoms, eventually to be absorbed into kingdoms. Distinct zones of power can be identified in the area of study during the sixth and seventh centuries – notably, the power base of southern Wiltshire and Hampshire in opposition to that of the Upper Thames valley to their north and of other polities to their west – and the spatial distribution of burials of this type

appears closely connected with significant frontiers or peripheries of influence. At a more localised level, and in contrast to the valley-side community cemeteries, isolated high-status burials were often situated on watersheds, zones which represented both physical boundaries and territorial frontiers. Accordingly, these sites lay adjacent to longer-distance ridge-top droveways or Roman roads. This topographical positioning relates to a variety of issues, including display – perhaps even conscious attempts by elite groups to attract veneration and cult status for their dead – territorial consolidation, changes in land use and the influence of overarching economic and social structures from c. AD 600.

It is widely acknowledged that the consolidation of elite power and the emergence of kingship is in many ways inextricably linked with the rise of Christianity. This raises difficult questions as to the principal drivers of change in certain fundamental aspects of burial rites in the seventh century. However, neither the provision of grave-goods nor barrow burial appear to have been considered wholly incompatible with Christianity, at least initially. The funerary appropriation of prominent earthworks continued to an extent concomitantly with the gradual adoption of churchyard burial over a period of several centuries from c. AD 650 onwards. Elite groups exploited and adapted an already established tradition, using this recognised funerary motif to associate themselves with the land and to garner support among the populace, as well as to demonstrate their dominance and territorial hegemony.

The reuse of antecedent monuments was certainly not an elite invention, having taken place in the context of community cemeteries (and indeed settlements) from the fifth century onwards. Barrow burial was already a powerful symbol throughout the area of study as well as further afield, and a 'medium understood' by local populations.² By the seventh century, however, we might propose that elites sought to monopolise the established tradition of monument appropriation as part of a political strategy. Elite families, regardless of ethnicity, adopted a new approach to an established funerary tradition in response to a rapidly changing society and shifting territorial frameworks. There are striking similarities between the topographic positioning of the Early Anglo-Saxon community cemetery at Winterbourne Gunner and that of the later isolated burial or burials at Ford, for example, suggesting deliberate emulation. Royal houses and other elite kin groups perhaps felt it pragmatic to retain the associations and support of the predominantly pagan rural population,³ although superstitions surrounding ancestral sites may have prevailed in all sectors of society. Reuse and monumentality need not have had overtly ethnic or religious connotations; it was a custom that adhered to a particular cultural paradigm, within which there were nonetheless strong regional and chronological variations.

The funerary reuse of earlier monuments cannot be considered a uniquely 'Anglo-Saxon' tradition either, as the numerous parallels and antecedents, both continental and insular, are manifest. This study has shown that intrusive barrow burial and the funerary appropriation of other prehistoric earthworks can be seen

² Loveluck 1995, 88.

³ Yorke 2003, 245.

to occur to a remarkable extent in Dorset, too, even in the absence of conclusive evidence for 'culturally Anglo-Saxon' traits. Problems of identification and dating have in the past been manifold for what are typically unfurnished graves, and many more examples may potentially date to this period. This not only implies mutual interaction between communities at this time but also highlights the potency that ancient features possessed throughout the study area, especially when combined with distinctive topographical elements.

The categorisation of a particular suite of burial rites that emerged in the fifth century in southern and eastern Britain as 'Anglo-Saxon' is founded in the notion that such practices were radically different, in contrast both with what came before and with the predominant rites practised contemporarily elsewhere in Britain. The rationale for these arguments is ostensibly persuasive on both counts. Fourth-century mortuary practice was characterised by inhumation, sometimes in cists or coffins, occasionally furnished with a few personal items. Cemeteries were typically extramural, sited alongside roads leading away from towns. From the fifth century, cemeteries in the eastern part of our study area were valley-focused and rural in location, and were characterised by predominantly furnished inhumation, with varying degrees of mixed inhumation and cremation rites in Hampshire. Despite regional, and indeed highly local, variations in burial rites in the east, certain common elements can be recognised, such as the relative ubiquity of weapon burial and typical modes of attire and material culture. In the west, meanwhile, unfurnished or sparsely furnished inhumation prevailed in a similar manner to the preceding century, and continued on in subsequent centuries. The apparent absence of funerary evidence in areas such as north-western Wiltshire does, too, intimate the survival, or at least semblances, of Iron Age 'invisible' traditions, including, perhaps, scattered cremation.

Implicit in this labelling of burial practices as 'Anglo-Saxon' is the idea that immigration and external forces played a significant role in shaping these rites. But, irrespective of the precise extent of migration and colonisation, it is increasingly recognised that internal processes of identity formation and emulation were more closely implicated in the emergence of distinctive patterns of ritual and cultural expression in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁴ Still, it is not necessary to reject the label 'Anglo-Saxon' altogether, provided that we bear in mind that inherent in these new rites were elements of hybridity. In this context, these modes of burial need not represent an 'othering' from 'British' or Roman practices (nor indeed should variations within rites in the post-Roman period). As I outlined in Chapter 3, such perspectives have their origins in ethnic binaries set out in the nineteenth century,⁵ and assume a sharp discontinuity in the majority of the people inhabiting the landscape that is unlikely to reflect the situation in the area of study.

Despite shifting settlement locations, the full range of natural resources offered by the river valleys and downland evidently continued to support small farming communities into the fifth and sixth centuries. That there were significant 'threads of continuity' in regimes of rural land management and organisation,⁶ if not

⁴ Cf. Martin 2015.

⁵ Lucy 1998; cf. Harland 2017.

⁶ Rippon *et al.* 2015, 168.

ownership, in eastern parts of the study area is supported by environmental data obtained from sites such as Abbots Worthy in the Itchen valley. Notwithstanding the abandonment of the villas themselves as dwelling places, a probable population decline and a shift towards pastoral land use, the fifth- and sixth-century rural economy undoubtedly 'continued to use the bones of the old landscape for its setting'.⁷ The presence of late Roman burials in cemeteries whose locations endured into subsequent centuries in the Itchen valley, and the siting of later cemeteries near to villas, as at Meonstoke, are also indicative of persistence of place.

The extent to which a Roman 'shadow' influenced practices is, then, of particular interest, and the evidence from this region has revealed a higher incidence of association with Roman-built structures than previous studies have suggested.⁸ This is especially apparent in Hampshire (in areas such as Winchester and its environs) and in Dorset (notably Poundbury). The absence of major Roman towns in Wiltshire, and the comparatively under-investigated archaeology of the small towns of this period, may account for the apparent infrequency of early medieval funerary engagement with Roman-built remains here. Evidence from the Wanborough area, on the northern edge of the Marlborough Downs, does, however, hint at a fifth- or sixth-century manifestation of 'roadside' burial or, at least, a strong spatial association with the course of Ermin Street, although this patterning may partly reflect investigation biases owing to the enduring use of this road to the present day.⁹

We should also be mindful that varying intensities in agrarian regimes since the medieval period are likely to have rendered monuments disproportionately extant on 'marginal' land as opposed to areas of high agricultural potential. Consequently, this may to an extent have produced false impressions of the topographic context and chronology of early medieval funerary reuse, masking the presence in valleys of further community cemeteries or even isolated burials that perhaps once incorporated barrows. Conversely, however, continuously occupied river valleys have tended to be the foci for modern development-led archaeological work, leading to discoveries that might not otherwise have emerged. Despite the poor preservation of barrows and other earthworks in many parts of the study area, recently excavated sites, such as Storey's Meadow in Hampshire, demonstrate that the potential for the discovery of early medieval cemeteries associated with even plough-levelled monuments remains high. Geophysical survey and targeted excavations at potential sites, especially taking into account the wider area around barrows, may have considerable value, although caution should of course be exercised in the case of invasive techniques. It has only been feasible in this study to include sites with conclusive evidence for burial, but interrogating find-spot data from the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which could indicate potential funerary sites, could be of significant value in future studies.

⁷ Costen 2011, 229.

⁸ E.g. Williams 1997, 21.

⁹ An intimation reinforced by the fact that a similar line of Roman and early medieval sites can be discerned along the course of the modern M4 motorway to the south-west of Wanborough (visible in Figure 14).

Appendix

Gazetteer of burial sites in the study area, c. AD 450–850

Wiltshire

Abbeymeads, Blunsdon St Andrew, SU142899

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

Indirectly associated: enclosure/prehistoric settlement

Two inhumation burials of probable C7th date were revealed during an excavation undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology in 2007, the grave cuts of which had previously been identified as part of an evaluation in 2000. Grave 1 was orientated NW–SE, with head to the NW, and consisted of a crouched burial of a mature adult of probable male sex, with an iron knife and copper-alloy buckle with plate. Two metres to the NE, Grave 2 contained the SW–NE-orientated (head to SW) extended inhumation burial of a mature adult of probable female sex, accompanied by a pin with garnet mount, a glass bead and, at the foot of the grave, an iron-bound bucket. A single hobnail, thought to be residual, was also found in the area of the torso. Three Iron Age pits were found just over 100m to the W. The site lies c. 500m W of Ermin Street Roman road.

References: McSloy *et al.* 2009; Brett and McSloy 2011

Aldbourne, SU262753

Pays: Marlborough Downs

A group of c. six skeletons, in an approximate line of shallow graves ‘with a few wedge-shaped nails’, was uncovered in 1960 during the construction of an extension to a poultry farm. The skeletons were poorly excavated and were left ‘scattered’ and ‘lying in the sides of the trenches’ (Meyrick 1961). They were initially interpreted as victims of a Civil War skirmish. In 2007–8, a watching brief by Wessex Archaeology led to the discovery of a Middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Twenty-six inhumations were within graves and at least one disarticulated individual was without an apparent grave. Sixteen were extended supine; there was one double burial, four flexed, two crouched and one prone; three were uncertain owing to truncation. Seventeen graves were orientated SW–NE (head to SW); nine W–E (head to W). Eight had grave-goods (extended supine/one flexed): iron knives, a seax, a bone comb and unidentified artefacts, suggesting a C7th date. There was at least one case of leprosy (the first recorded case in Wiltshire).

References: Meyrick 1961; Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2008; Reynolds 2009, 59

All Saints, Harnham, SU140288

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

A female skeleton with bronze pin and two probable C6th saucer brooches were found by A. H. Wilson in 1931, while courts were being made for the Harnham Tennis Club, just N of the Vicarage, on the S side of Harnham Road.

References: Cunnington 1933, 155; Shortt 1948, 345; Meaney 1964, 269; Grinsell 1957, 103; Eagles 2001, 206; Cherryson 2005b, 171; Draper 2006, 159

Alvediston, ST966252

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: linear earthwork; bowl barrow

This low barrow, excavated in 1925 by Clay, is situated 'a few yards south of the ridgeway', and was surrounded by a ditch. A supine extended burial orientated S–N (head to S), with its feet under the centre of the barrow, was found in a rectangular cist. Five or six large blocks of flint had been placed over the body, and the lower jaw appeared to have been pierced by a sharp instrument before death. Finds included a spearhead (on left side of head), 'sugar-loaf' shield boss (just above left elbow), an iron knife (over pelvis close to left hand) and a fragment of a Kimmeridge shale bracelet. Clay speculated that the spearhead and knife had been ritually broken or 'killed'. NMR entry says 'Bronze Age barrow', though it also says 'primary Saxon burial'. Clay reports that it is unusual for a 'Saxon' barrow to have a ditch, but notes the presence of Early Iron Age pottery in the barrow earth and on the old turf line under the mound, and that the burial cut through the Iron Age cattle-way.

References: Clay 1926, 435–9; Cunnington 1933, 157; Grinsell 1957: 27, 149, 242; Meaney 1964, 264; Bonney 1966, 29; Geake 1997, 186; Eagles 2001, 219; Cherryson 2005b, 138–9; Draper 2006, 142

Barbury Castle, SU150763

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: hillfort

Prior to 1934, iron knives, an iron spearhead and a C6th–7th scramasax/seax were found, seemingly not associated with a burial. In 1939–45, several skeletons were found in ramparts by US troops. They are at some distance, however, so are not necessarily related. Alternatively, the finds could signify a votive deposition or indicate the site of a battle.

References: Cunnington 1933, 174; Grinsell 1957, 94; Meaney 1964, 265; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 212; Cherryson 2005b, 141; Draper 2006, 166; Semple 2013

Barnes Place, Mere, ST813322

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Part of an inhumation was recorded during refurbishment of a house at 9, Barnes Place, in 1995. The supine inhumation was orientated with the head to the W and

was accompanied by grave-goods including a gold bracteate, two possible earrings with an inset stone, probably a garnet, and three glass beads. The grave-goods indicate a C7th date. Part of the left mandible with two molars from a second individual (non-modern) was found in 2007.

References: Wessex Archaeology 1995; Eagles 2001, 219; Cherryson 2005b, 161–2; Draper 2006, 156

Barrow Clump, SU165469

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: bell barrow. Indirectly associated: unidentified barrows

A bell barrow was first excavated by Col. Hawley in 1890s, who found a crouched skeleton, beaker and flint dagger, interpreted as primary, and interments of 3 crouched adults and 1 infant, interpreted as secondary. In 1935, a socketed iron spearhead was found in a ‘rabbit scrape’, implying an intrusive interment in the barrow. Fieldwork undertaken in 2003–4, as part of an investigation into the extent of badger damage, revealed 13 inhumation burials in 12 graves. These included a richly furnished ‘female’ burial with 30 finds, including a square-headed brooch (mid-late C6th), 2 saucer brooches (late C6th), a penannular brooch (C1st–4th), iron horse bits and iron rings. Evidence of Neolithic settlement activity was also discovered below the Bronze Age barrow. Sixty further early medieval graves, and 2 Early Bronze Age cremation burials in collared urns, were unearthed in 2012–14 by Operation Nightingale and Wessex Archaeology, bringing the total number of excavated early medieval graves to 72. A continuing programme of investigation by Breaking Ground Heritage, initiated 2017, has uncovered several further graves. References: Hawley 1910; Last 2004; 2005; Stoodley 2006; DIO and Wessex Archaeology 2013; 2014

Basset Down, SU115799

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: other Roman building

Two skeletons were discovered in 1822 during landscaping near the summit of the hill in the garden of Basset Down House. The inhumations, side-by-side, were interpreted as ‘young warriors’, and were accompanied by a portion of a shield, spear, knife, brooches and a pair of clasps, and strings of beads. Coins and part of a spoon were also found. In 1830, further skeletons were found to the W, and more in 1839. Roman material including pottery and quernstones was found in 1913. Finds also included: 2 saucer brooches, a penannular brooch, a bow-shaped brooch, 25 or 26 amber beads, 4 irregular pieces of pierced amber, 17 glass beads and a globular rock-crystal bead, and suggest a C6th date.

References: Goddard 1895; 1913, 282; Cunlinton 1933, 155; Grinsell 1957, 84; Meaney 1964, 265; Bonney 1966, 29; Eagles 2001, 212; Semple 2003, 86; Cherryson 2005b, 141; Draper 2006, 155

Blacknall Field, SU155580

Pays: Vale of Pewsey

A flat cemetery of over 100 graves, including 4 cremations, was excavated between 1969 and 1976. A number of the burials were of considerable status, and demonstrate links with the Upper Thames valley. The cemetery seems to have been in use between c. AD 475 and 550.

References: Eagles 1994, 16; 2001, 209, 218; Cherryson 2005b, 167; Draper 2006, 157; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 187; Annable and Eagles 2010

Boscombe Airfield, SU177400

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: bell barrow

In 1930, a Bronze Age bell barrow on the Amesbury–Idmiston parish boundary was levelled for the airfield. ‘Secondary’ interments with a socketed spearhead, bronze belt-hook, small pair of iron shears and a small bronze finger-ring were found. The site is just under 1km from Roman road Margary 44.

References: Newall 1931; Grinsell 1957, 30, 207; Meaney 1964, 266; Bonney 1966, 29; Cherryson 2005b, 142; Draper 2006, 142

Bowl’s Barrow, ST942467

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: long barrow

Neolithic long barrow, excavated in 1801 by W. Cunnington, in 1864 by J. Thurnam, and in 1885–6 by W. and H. Cunnington. Cunnington Sr. found a SW–NE skeleton near the E end, at a depth of 2ft 9in (c. 0.83m), accompanied by a bronze buckle and few pieces of bronze, and 2 further burials towards the centre, heads to S.

References: Hoare 1812, 87; Cunnington 1888; Cunnington 1914, 392; 1933, 164; Goddard 1913, 263; Grinsell 1957, 76, 141; Meaney 1964, 266; Cherryson 2005b, 156; Draper 2006, 152

Bratton Castle, ST901514

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: bowl barrow; hillfort

A possible bowl barrow at entrance of Bratton Castle hillfort was excavated in the C18th. An apparently secondary inhumation was accompanied by an axe and a sword, suggesting an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 143–4

Brimble Hill, SU155802

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Excavations in 2000 in a ploughed field following metal detector finds uncovered 2 probable C6th inhumations: a child, accompanied by a pair of gilded saucer

brooches and 2 amber/glass beads; and an elderly male with a sword, 2 spear-heads, a shield boss and 2 buckles.

References: Pollard 2002, 291; Cherryson 2005b, 144; Draper 2006, 167

Broad Chalke, SU042250

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: linear earthwork

At least 6 inhumations were uncovered in 1923–25, 400m SE of the church. The first was discovered at a depth of 1ft 3in (c. 0.38m) by a man digging for chalk at the side of the road. In 1924, 5 more were found, lying roughly N–S, without grave-goods. The burial ground was ‘on the end of a long strip lynchet’, the graves being ‘roughly-cut cists in the top of layers of the chalk’ (Clay 1925b, 94). Another 19 burials were found during excavations in the same year. All orientations and positioning, some former burials disturbed by later ones. Every grave contained some burnt or unburnt flint or iron pyrites, alongside or above skeletons. Eight had grave-goods, including a shield boss, spearheads, knives and buckles.

References: Clay 1925b; Cunington 1933, 153; Grinsell 1957, 50; Meaney 1964, 266; Bonney 1966, 28; Geake 1997, 186; Eagles 2001, 209; Cherryson 2005b, 144; Draper 2006, 145

Broad Hinton Down, SU130753

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow

An inhumation, interpreted as secondary intrusive, was found in the excavation of bowl barrow in the last quarter of the C19th. It was accompanied by an iron spear-head, suggesting an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date.

References: Grinsell 1957, 162; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 231; Cherryson 2005b, 144–5; Draper 2006, 146

Broad Town Hill, SU095776

Pays: Marlborough Downs

In 2000, human bone was exposed by livestock and soil erosion in a bank overlooking the village. Excavations revealed the unaccompanied inhumation of an adult male, head to the SW, later radiocarbon dated to between the mid C6th and late C7th. The burial lies close to the cross-roads of several routeways. Similarities with the Stonehenge decapitation burial (now known to be later) are mentioned by Clarke.

References: Clarke 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; Cherryson 2005b, 145; Draper 2006, 146

Bulford, SU174435

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: Neolithic hengiform monuments; Bronze Age ring-ditches/barrows

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A Middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found to be associated with Neolithic hengiform enclosures. One grave produced a radiocarbon date in the range of AD 660–780. A number of large postholes were located at the end of a row of burials, aligned with the head end of other graves in the row, perhaps marking available plots in the cemetery or the prospective graves of important individuals.

References: Egging Dinwiddy 2015; Powell 2015; Hilt 2016

Collingbourne Duncis, SU245541

Pays: Salisbury Plain

An inhumation cemetery was discovered during the construction of a housing estate in 1974. Excavations located 33 individuals: 25 adults and 8 infants/juveniles. Most were supine, several in graves too short for the occupants; one was prone. Most adults were accompanied by grave-goods: brooches, knives, shield bosses, spearheads, beads, and bone comb, indicating a C6th- to mid-C7th date. There was also a bed burial of an adult female, accompanied only by a pottery vessel. The cemetery lies 200m NE of a broadly contemporary settlement on lower-lying ground adjacent to the River Bourne.

References: Ginchell 1978; Eagles 1994, 15; Pine 2001, 115; Cherryson 2005b, 147; Draper 2006, 148; Dinwiddy and Stoodley 2016

Callas Hill I, SU215830

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman road. Indirectly associated: Roman villa

A grave containing the skeleton of a young man with a socketed iron spearhead and an iron knife was found in 1927 by the side of the Ermin Street Roman road (Margary 41b).

References: Grinsell 1957, 118; Meaney 1964, 267; Goddard 1928, 91; Passmore 1928, 244; Eagles 2001, 212; Cherryson 2005b, 180; Draper 2006, 163

Callas Hill II, SU216833

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

Directly associated: Roman villa; Roman temple. Indirectly associated: Roman road
An E–W early medieval burial was found accompanied by a spearhead, a bucket mount and fragments of pottery cut into the remains of a C2nd–4th Roman villa. The villa may also have incorporated a temple, possibly housing a spring.

References: Smith 1978, 136; Cherryson 2005b, 180; Draper 2006, 163; Wiltshire and Swindon HER SU28SW300

Castle Eaton, SU160960

Pays: Northern Clay Vale

Ploughing disturbed a C5th or C6th burial with grave-goods including 3 pierced Roman coins, 3 glass beads, a melon bead and a fragment of bronze buckle. A possible SFB has been located 1km to the W at SU146960.

References: Friend 1980, 207; Eagles 2001, 219, 222; Cherryson 2005b, 146; Draper 2006, 146

Charlton Plantation, SU166248

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: unidentified round barrow

A cemetery was discovered during road widening in 1981, comprising 42 graves, of which 4 were double burials, and 1 cremation. Most graves were aligned W–E, but 8 lay S–N and 3 N–S. Three graves were partly lined with flint and several with planks. Many with grave-goods (shield bosses, swords and brooches), dating cemetery to the C5th–6th. A low mound 15m to SW may be the remains of a barrow.

References: Davies 1984; Eagles 1994, 15; 2001, 206, 218; Cherryson 2005b, 146–7; Draper 2006, 150

Church Street, Calne, ST998708

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

Probable C5th–7th deposits were excavated in 1996/7 on land behind Church St, alongside the churchyard. Part of a W–E burial with some iron nails and mineralised wood was found. The site was possibly once part of the churchyard.

References: McMahon 1997; Fielden 1998, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 146; Draper 2006, 146

Codford St. Peter 1b, ST979427

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow

A probable primary inhumation in the remains of a wooden coffin was discovered when a barrow was opened in the early C19th by Hoare. The skeleton was orientated N–S, and supine extended, within a large cist cut into barrow. Two pieces of ‘fine Roman pottery’ were also found. The nails are in Wiltshire Museum, acc. no. DZSWS:STHEAD.295 (Stourhead Collection).

References: Hoare 1812, 78; Cunnington 1933, 157–8; Grinsell 1957, 166; Meaney 1964, 264; Bonney 1966, 29; Cherryson 2005b, 140; Draper 2006, 148

Codford St. Peter 6, ST980428

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: bowl barrow

A bowl barrow, of probable prehistoric but possible early medieval construction, was opened in the early C19th by Hoare and was found to contain an extended skeleton accompanied by a firwood bucket with copper alloy strips and a possible spearhead.

References: Hoare 1812, 79; Goddard 1913, 229; Cunnington 1933, 163; Grinsell 1957, 59, 167; Meaney 1964, 264–5; Bonney 1966, 29; Cook 2004, 100–1; Cherryson 2005b, 140; Draper 2006, 148

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Coombe Bissett I (Salisbury Racecourse), SU104281

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: Roman road; field system; unidentified barrow

A grave was found in the smaller of 2 barrows (Grinsell's 2c) excavated by W. Cunnington in 1803 near the crossroads between the Roman road and the Old Sarum–Shaftesbury road. Cunnington found a large oblong pit with grave-goods but no human remains. The 'grave' was exceptionally well furnished, with a sword in the remains of a wooden scabbard, 2 garnet- and shell-set bronze pyramid sword studs, 3 spearheads, 2 iron knives, a shield with studs and shield boss, a small bronze buckle with rectangular riveted plate, 2 small iron buckles, 1 gold and 5 silver wire slip rings, a gilded bronze skilnet, a wooden vessel, a ribbed palm cup and a Harden type E cone-beaker. The items suggest a later C6th to early C7th date. References: Hoare 1821b, 26–7; Goddard 1913, 236; Cunnington 1933, 158–9; Grinsell 1957, 60, 169(2c), 243; Meaney 1964, 274–5; Bonney 1966, 29; Geake 1997, 188; Cherryson 2005b, 148; Draper 2006, 149; Hines and Bayliss 2013, 530

Coombe Bissett II, SU104281

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: unidentified round barrow Indirectly associated: Roman road

This was the larger of 2 barrows excavated in 1803 by W. Cunnington, and only 1 of group of 4 still surviving. The disturbed remains of 2 unaccompanied skeletons, interpreted as possible intrusive 'Saxon', were found. No 'primary' interment was found. The location next to Coombe Bissett I points to an extended ?cemetery or associated isolated burials.

References: Grinsell 1957, 60, 169(2b); Meaney 1964, 274–5; Geake 1997, 188; Cherryson 2005b, 148–9

Ebbesbourne Wake, ST993234

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow

Prior to 1925, an inhumation burial with the head to the N (male c. 50yrs), accompanied by an iron spearhead, shield boss and 3 iron shield plates, was found on Barrow Hill by workmen laying water pipes between the reservoir on the top of the hill and Cleave Cottages in the S. The grave lay c. 100m down the slope, and was cut through by the workmen. Clay made small excavations at the findspot, although most of the bones had already been removed, and found the spearhead next to the right shoulder.

References: Clay 1925a; 1925b, Plate II; Cunnington 1933, 168; Grinsell 1957, 69; Meaney 1964, 265; Eagles 2001, 219–20; Cherryson 2005b, 152; Draper 2006, 150

Ell Barrow, SU073513

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: long barrow

An unaccompanied secondary inhumation at 1–2ft (c. 0.3–0.6m) depth with cleft in skull (interpreted as sword cut) discovered when a long barrow was excavated before 1869 by J. Thurnam. The barrow is orientated NE–SW on a low ridge in open downland, now forming part of Larkhill Artillery Range impact zone. There are slight traces of ‘Celtic’ fields around the barrow, which are severely damaged by military activity.

References: Thurnam 1869, 196; Cunnington 1933, 166; Grinsell 1957, 122; Meaney 1964, 267; Cherryson 2005b, 152; Draper 2006, 165

Elston, SU068453

Pays: Salisbury Plain

An early medieval knife and 2 skeletons were discovered c. 1856. The interments could represent either isolated burials or part of a larger cemetery.

References: Cunnington 1933, 168; Meaney 1964, 267; Grinsell 1957, 95; Robinson 1987; Cherryson 2005b, 153; Draper 2006, 157

Evelyn Street, SU158832

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

A skeleton accompanied by a spearhead and a knife was found in Swindon Corporation Yard, Evelyn Street, in 1929. The grave-goods suggest an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date for the burial. A second inhumation was recorded during excavations in Evelyn Street in 1978. Finds included Neolithic flint implements. Early medieval and medieval pottery were also recovered. Draper (2006, 161) says the same burial was excavated in 1978 as was found in 1929, but other sources imply they were 2 separate burials.

References: Cunnington 1933, 156; Grinsell 1957, 113; Meaney 1964, 276; Bonney 1966, 28; Eagles 2001, 222; Cherryson 2005b, 177; Draper 2006, 161

Ford I, SU172332

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow. Indirectly associated: Roman road

Site of Bronze Age bowl barrow to NW of Fieldfare House, Ford, excavated 1964 by Musty following the discovery of a Bronze Age cremation during agricultural activities (a large ring-ditch was revealed by ploughing). Traces of an inhumation with grave-goods including the tip of an iron sword, bronze strip and unburnt bones were found near the cremation. The grave had possibly been obliterated by ploughing.

References: Fowler 1966, 36; Musty 1969; Cherryson 2005b, 154; Draper 2006, 154

Ford II, SU172332

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow; Roman road

Second circular earthmark c. 25m SW of Ford I. Excavated by Musty in 1964. Large grave in entrance of penannular ditch. Adult male with 2 spearheads, shield

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boss, bronze hanging bowl, bone comb, seax within sheath and buckle. Ring-ditch and absence of prehistoric finds suggests primary barrow? Hanging bowl similar to one found at Lowbury Hill, Berkshire, where there was also a similar set of grave-goods.

References: Musty 1969; Geake 1997, 186; Cherryson 2005b, 154; Draper 2006, 154

Foxhill, SU224820

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman road

Six–eight inhumations excavated in 1941 by workmen digging trenches on the W side of Ermin Street Roman road, 1km NW of its junction with the Ridgeway. Associated finds include a globular pot, belt buckle, knife, sword, shield boss, split spearhead and saucer brooches.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 180–1; Cunnington 1942; Draper 2006, 163; Eagles 2001, 212; Fowler 1966, 36; Grinsell 1957, 118; Meaney 1964, 268

Harlestone House, SU245837

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

Directly associated: linear earthwork; enclosure

Three SFBs were excavated in Bishopstone village by Foundations Archaeology. A single burial was also excavated, a female of 35–45 years, which cut the edge of one of the buildings. Prehistoric features were also recorded on the site.

References: King and Bethell 2011

Harnham Hill, SU137287

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: Iron Age settlement

Saxon inhumation cemetery in Low Field, Harnham Hill. Excavations 1853–54 by Akerman recorded 73 inhumations mainly extended E–W, some with grave-goods – Saxon ornaments and weapons, including fork and bronze-bound wooden dish, as well as Roman coin and pottery. Finds in British Museum, Salisbury and Devizes Museums. Frankish grave-goods appear to be earliest, suggesting mid-C6th to C7th date. The number of females with Romano-British style rings and bracelets is notable. Thirty-three skeletons were without grave-goods.

References: Akerman 1853a; 1853b; Jackson 1854; Shortt 1948; Grinsell 1957, 102–3; Meaney 1964, 268–9; Eagles 1994, 15; 2001, 206, 218; Cherryson 2005b, 156; Draper 2006, 159

Hinton Downs, SU253800

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow. Indirectly associated: Roman settlement

The excavation of a bowl barrow on Hinton Down c. 1889–90 led to the discovery of an inhumation, interpreted as secondary. The burial was extended, head to S, and

lay 0.6m below the surface of the barrow. It was accompanied by an iron spearhead of late C6th to early C7th date.

References: Goddard 1913, 266; Grinsell 1957, 42; Meaney 1964, 269; Eagles 1997, 381; Cherryson 2005b, 157; Draper 2006, 144

Kelsey Road, SU150302

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

A skeleton with the head to the NW and feet to the SE, accompanied by an iron spearhead, a small knife and an iron chisel, was found in 1878 on the E side of Kelsey Road, Salisbury.

References: Cunnington 1933, 169; Grinsell 1957, 104; Eagles 2001, 206; Cherryson 2005b, 171–2; Draper 2006, 159

King Barrow, ST897444

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: long barrow

Large Neolithic long barrow (Grinsell's 'Warminster 14') excavated by W. Cunnington in 1800 and Hoare shortly before 1812. Three SW–NE skeletons were found close to the surface. On the thigh of one lay an iron sword. Near these skeletons, a fragment of urn was found, possibly from a cremation that was 'disturbed by the deposit of the above bodies' (Hoare 1812, 73). The sword is discussed by Eagles and Field (2004, 63) and is thought to be late C7th.

References: Hoare 1812, 72; Goddard 1913, 340; Cunnington 1914, 404; 1933, 166; Grinsell 1957, 145; Meaney 1964, 269; Eagles and Field 2004, 63; Cherryson 2005b, 158

King's Play Hill, SU009659

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Indirectly associated: long barrow

Excavations in 1909 of a possible primary early medieval barrow (Grinsell's 'Heddington 1a') revealed a large central grave with a supine male skeleton, head to the W, within the remains of a wooden coffin (evidenced by 36 iron nails).

References: Cunnington 1910; Grinsell 1957, 177; Meaney 1964, 269; Semple 2003, 85; Cherryson 2005b, 158; Draper 2006, 152

Lake Field, SU109402

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: unidentified round barrow

An inhumation burial was found in one of the Lake Barrow Group barrows prior to 1763. The inhumation was accompanied by a spearhead, probable shield boss and knife. The grave-goods suggest an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date for the burial. Stukeley was given a drawing of the spearhead by Mr Collins, a bookseller from Sarum (Lukis 1887, 277). The location to NW in Lake Group (SU109402) is more likely, as (a) Stukeley says that 'the new turnpike from the Devizes to Salisbury has

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dug through another tumulus in the same group of Lake field', which is too far to be the Lake Down Group, and (b) the Lake Down Group is not marked on the first edition OS map.

References: Lukis 1887, 277–8; Grinsell 1957, 123(50b), 198; Meaney 1964, 270; Cherryson 2005b, 182–3; Draper 2006, 165

Lake, Woodford Valley, SU137388

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Indirectly associated: bowl barrows

In 1996, investigations prior to the construction of an amenities/trout lake next to the River Avon found a waterlogged young female burial, about 20–30 years old. The site was under rough pasture before the excavation of the lake, and an earth-work survey and watching brief were carried out. Timbers were detected, which proved to be a wooden grave cover consisting of 14 loose oak timbers over the body and to either side against the grave cut. McKinley (2003, 15) ascribed possible British ethnicity to the individual, commenting that 'she was carefully buried ... adjacent to the river, and on its western bank in what, at this time, is likely to have been territory predominantly occupied by the indigenous population'. She was indeed originally thought to be Romano-British, but radiocarbon analysis dated the timber to AD 450–610 (95%), with a date around 500 most likely. A small sherd of Romano-British pottery and some burnt flint was found but were probably residual. The body was fully prone and extended, S–N, with the left arm flexed with a hand resting on the abdomen and the right arm extended.

References: McKinley 2003, 7–18; Cherryson 2005b, 159; Draper 2006, 49, 165

London Road, Amesbury, SU155416

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Prior to c. 1835, several inhumations with knives or seaxes discovered during road widening on London Road.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 139–40; Draper 2006, 142

London Road, Mildenhall, SU207686

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman villa; hillfort

In 1927, workmen uncovered a skeleton with a 'Saxon' iron knife or spearhead on London Road near Savernake hospital.

References: Passmore 1928, 244; Meaney 1964, 270; Cherryson 2005b, 160

Market Lavington, SU013542

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: other Roman building

A C5th–7th cemetery containing 42 inhumations was excavated in the late 1980s along the NW edge of the churchyard and to the W and SW of the church. Grave-

goods included disc and saucer brooches, spearheads of C5th, C6th and C7th type, shield-bosses, dress pins, knives, buckles, belt fittings and amber beads. There was an associated settlement less than 50m away, and one grave cut a Romano-British building. Although such close spatial association between cemetery and settlement was previously thought to be uncommon, examples from other parts of the county have arisen (see Reynolds 2002). It is still, however, a rare occurrence in Wiltshire and Hampshire – at Collingbourne Ducis there is a distance of 150m between settlement and cemetery. The cemetery is also – unusually – closer to the river than the settlement (Williams and Newman 2006: 174).

References: Eagles 2001, 210, 217; Williams and Newman 1998; 2006; Cherryson 2005b, 161; Draper 2006, 155

Monkton Deverill, ST858377

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

An inhumation cemetery was recorded during a watching brief for the construction of a branch line of the Codford–Ilchester pipeline in 1989–90. The site is on a low bluff close to the edge of the floodplain, at a height of 130m OD. The immediate subsurface geology is thick calcareous clay, containing lenses of chalky gravel. Fifteen graves were excavated: 1 inhumation was placed in the ring-ditch of a barrow, thought to be primary Saxon. The others were placed in regular rows or groups with consistent orientation, either with heads to the W or SW. A SW–NE (head to the NE) adult male was buried in the centre of the ring-ditch; above him was a juvenile of c.12–15 years, accompanied by the only grave-good – a tanged C7th knife. To the W was a row of 5 graves all on the same alignment. To the S of the ring-ditch, a SSW–NNE grave cut the ditch as was in turn cut by a W–E grave (Geake 1997, 186). Six further W–E graves formed 2 rows running S. A number of the graves had partial stone linings of Romano-British masonry. Romano-British activity in the area is evidenced by the presence of 2 converging Roman roads (one of which passes adjacent to the cemetery) and by the temple on Cold Kitchen Hill, just over 1km to NW. Fragments of Romano-British pottery were also found in fill of ditch. One contained an organic stain, probably the remains of a timber lining. Only the graves affected by the laying of the pipeline were excavated – it is thought that the cemetery extends further.

References: Rawlings 1995; Geake 1997, 186; Eagles 2001, 219; Cherryson 2005b, 162; Draper 2006, 153

Netheravon Airfield I, SU156486

Pays: Salisbury Plain

From NMR SU 14 NE 59: 'A single inhumation burial was found at a depth of 4ft on the RAF aerodrome at Netheravon in October 1938. The only finds apart from the bones were 21 iron nails with fragments of wood still adhering to them, and a piece of iron (cleat?) suggesting that the burial had been in a wooden coffin. Though nothing else was found it seems that there can be little doubt that this was a pagan Saxon burial. It is quite likely that there was originally a small barrow over the

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grave, similar to that opened on King's Play Down, Heddington.' Meaney (1964, 271) says it was a 'young person', 'head W'.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 163; Grinsell 1957, 71; Meaney 1964, 271; Cunnington 1939

Netheravon Airfield II, SU154488

Pays: Salisbury Plain

In August 1913, a burial was found during excavations for the cellars of the officers' mess at Netheravon Aerodrome. The skeleton was found in a shallow grave, fully extended with the head to the W. A bronze pin, iron spearhead, and some strips of iron and iron rivets, with pieces of wood adhering, probably the remains of a shield, were found. Another skeleton, which was unaccompanied, was apparently found close by.

References: Cunnington 1926, 400; 1933, 169; Grinsell 1957, 91; Meaney 1964, 270; Cherryson 2005b, 163; Draper 2006, 151

Newtown Plantation, ST920428

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Headless skeleton and 3 skulls (apparently with sword cuts on necks) found in 1952* during building work for Lord Heytesbury's new house. A C6th–7th iron buckle lay on the pelvis of the skeleton (Salisbury Museum, Accn No: 83/54). The skulls, 2 according to Lord Heytesbury, were found in a hole in the chalk about 3m E of the NW corner of the house (corner approximately at ST92014283) and the skeleton also in a hole in the chalk, about 10m NW of the corner. The depth of soil beneath the burial apparently indicated a lynchet. Some fragments of bone have since been found in the grounds. The hundred boundary location points to a possible execution cemetery.

*Meaney writes 1852, but this is unlikely, as Westover was built in the 1950s (William, son of Leonard, 4th Lord Heytesbury, served in the RAF during WWII, and after the war spent a number of years as an art teacher before moving to Heytesbury. There he built a new house which he called Westover on land that was known as the Newtown Plantation, where he lived from 1955 until he died in 1971).

References: Meaney 1964, 269; Bonney 1966, 29; Cherryson 2005b, 156–7; Draper 2004; 2006, 152

Ogbourne St. Andrew, SU188723

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow

A large round barrow in the churchyard was excavated by Henry Cunnington in 1885, revealing Bronze Age deposits and a secondary 'Middle–Late Saxon' male burial in a coffin with elaborate metal clamps and fittings, dating from the C9th–11th (Semple 2013).

References: Cunnington 1885, 345–8; Goddard 1913, 300; Meaney 1964, 271; Grinsell 1957, 94, 186; Geake 1997, 186; Pollard 2001, 250; Semple 2003, 88; 2013, 42; Cherryson 2005b, 165; Draper 2006, 157

Overton Hill 6, SU119683

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman barrow; Roman road; field system

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow; Roman barrow

A mound of similar dimensions to Overton Hill 6a, ditched with no trace of posts, was excavated by Smith and Simpson (1964). The central pit had been previously disturbed. The only finds, from the mound and ditch fill, were some cremated human bone, animal bone and a few Romano-British sherds. A small amount of material of Early Anglo-Saxon date, including grass-tempered potsherds, was also present. Smith and Simpson (1964) considered 6, 6a and 7 to represent Roman funerary monuments, each consisting of a central burial beneath a low mound surrounded by a ring of closely set posts that may have stood up to 1.8m in height. References: Cherryson 2005b, 166; Draper 2006, 164; Eagles 1986; Fowler 2000b, 53; Grinsell 1957, 195(6); Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 176–8, 229–30; Smith and Simpson 1964

Overton Hill 6a, SU119683

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman barrow; field system

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow; Roman barrow; Roman road

Similar to Overton Hill 7, though smaller, this consisted of a mound c. 0.3m high and surrounded by a ditch of 4.6m external diameter. The ditch appeared to have been a 'bedding trench' for a near-continuous circle of closely spaced timber uprights. Centrally placed within the enclosed area was a circular pit 0.6m in diameter and 0.3m deep. The pit had previously been disturbed, and little in the way of artefactual evidence remained, although some cremated bone was found in the mound. A few small pieces of bronze and iron occurred in mound and ditch fills, as well as scattered animal bones and Roman potsherds. Early Anglo-Saxon finds included organic-tempered pottery, an iron bar with decorated terminal and an iron buckle, taken to indicate the former presence of secondary interments.

References: Draper 2006, 164; Eagles 1986; Fowler 2000b, 53; Grinsell 1957, 195(6a); Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 176–8, 229–30; Smith and Simpson 1964

Overton Hill 6b, SU119683

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow; field system. Indirectly associated: Roman barrows; Roman road

'Secondary' interments discovered during the excavation of Grinsell's West Overton 6b in 1962 by Isobel Smith and D. D. A. Simpson (in advance of destruction by ploughing). The mound had escaped the attention of previous excavators, although it was double the diameter of the Roman barrows. Three of the 4 burials (2 adult males, described as warriors, and an adult female) were accompanied by grave-goods including an iron spearhead, 2 knives, 2 shield bosses and a number of silver gilt studs, brooches and beads, with pottery of Early Anglo-Saxon date. A child of

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indeterminate sex had no grave-goods. The grave-goods suggest a C5th–6th date. Eagles claims the female is C5th, on the grounds that the penannular brooch may be late Roman, while Pollard and Reynolds (2002) and White (1988, 16–17) consider all 4 to be C6th, as amber was not present in the area in the C5th.

References: Grinsell 1957, 195(6b); Sabben-Clare 1961–3, 467; Bonney 1966, 29; Smith and Simpson 1964, 122–55; Eagles 1986, 103–20; Geake 1997, 47; Fowler 2000b, 53; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 176–8, 229–30; Cherryson 2005b, 165–6; Draper 2006, 164

Overton Hill 7, SU119683

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman barrow; field system

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow; Roman barrow; Roman road

Initially thought to be a prehistoric barrow when first excavated in the late C18th or early C19th by both Colt Hoare and Thurnam; later excavations in 1962 revealed a C2nd Roman tomb. The mound was surrounded by a ditch, which proved to have been a 'bedding trench' for a circle of 54 closely spaced upright timbers. The only *in situ* artefact was a single Roman coarse pottery sherd in the chalk packing. A slight inner chalk bank existed in places around the circuit, occasionally overlying traces of the original ground surface. At the centre of the area enclosed by the ditch was a circular pit 0.6m in diameter, with vertical sides c.0.6m deep. It was much disturbed by previous investigations, and scattered through its fill and the mound were numerous small fragments of bronze, possibly representing the remains of cups, caskets etc., fragments of cremated (mostly human) bone, some animal bone, and some Roman potsherds, generally pointing to an early C2nd date. A shallow grave intersecting with the outer edge of the ditch in the NE quadrant contained the extended skeleton of a child. The excavators considered it to be a secondary Early Anglo-Saxon inhumation, and argued that an unburnt skull fragment, an iron knife and several Early Anglo-Saxon grass-tempered potsherds from the mound and ditch indicate the presence of other secondary burials.

References: Hoare 1821a, 91; Grinsell 1957, 195(7); Smith and Simpson 1964; Eagles 1986; Fowler 2000b, 53; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 176–8, 229–30; Cherryson 2005b, 166; Draper 2006, 164

Perham Down, SU252492

Pays: Salisbury Plain

An inhumation burial (male in 40s) accompanied by a split-socketed spearhead and a 'mammiiform' shield boss was found in 1939. The shape of the shield boss suggests a C7th or later date. Prehistoric ditch runs SW–NE, passing the site less than 500m to the E. First marked as 'Ditch' on the 1924 1:2500 OS map, although the line of it is drawn on earlier maps. Association of the linear feature with the burial may be coincidental.

References: Stevens 1942; Grinsell 1957, 92; Meaney 1964, 271; Cherryson 2005b, 166–7; Draper 2006, 162

Petersfinger, SU163293

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

A predominantly C6th inhumation cemetery, with 70–1 skeletons in 63–4 graves, perhaps originally 2 adjacent cemeteries serving different communities (Draper 2006, 147). Numerous skeletons were discovered in 1846 while making a cutting for the South-Western Railway just to the S of the cemetery. Later further skeletons were discovered after a fall of chalk which necessitated a widening of the cutting, and in 1862 Dr Blackmore discovered 2 skeletons with heads to the NE, covered by broken flints and accompanied by animal bones and a glass bead. Excavations were carried out in 1948–51 by Prof and Mrs Stuart Piggott, Dr J. F. S. Stone, R. J. C. Atkinson and R. S. Newall on behalf of Salisbury Museum. The cemetery occupied a slight natural terrace on the steep western escarpment of Ashley Hill, Petersfinger. Excavations revealed 70 inhumations lying both NS and EW, unprotected, apart from four graves where natural flint blocks were packed around the skeleton or used as a covering. The grave-goods from the cemetery, which was generally poorly furnished, were considered by E. T. Leeds and H. de S. Shortt to show an admixture of Frankish and Saxon objects, the Frankish objects being generally of earlier date (mid-C6th). Finds are in Salisbury Museum.

References: Leeds and Shortt 1953; Grinsell 1957, 58; Willoughby 1960, 311; Meaney 1964, 271; Bonney 1966, 28, 36; Moore and Algar 1968; Eagles 1994, 13–15; 2001, 206; Cherryson 2005b, 167; Draper 2006, 147–8

Poulton Downs, SU203715

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: Roman well

A skeleton (female?) was discovered at a depth of 23ft during the excavation of a Roman well on Poulton Downs in 1948. The skeleton was accompanied by a tanged iron knife, 2 iron buckles, 3 beads – 1 amber and 2 yellowish-grey beads ‘of vitreous paste’, 1 with red spots – and a bronze pin/needle. The grave-goods suggest a C6th–7th date. The skeleton appears to have either been dropped or thrown into the well ‘with a sarsen stone thrown in on top’ (?). Roman surface finds within the immediate vicinity possibly indicate the presence of a Roman settlement.

References: Meyrick 1949; Grinsell 1957, 89; Meaney 1964, 271–2; Cherryson 2005b, 168

Quidhampton, SU134329

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: Roman road; other Roman buildings

Two adult inhumations, either C5th or late C7th to early C8th in date (HER says probable C5th), recorded during excavation of a gas pipeline NW of Old Sarum. One of the inhumations had its head to the W; the other to the SW. Grave-goods included 2 applied brooches, a glass bead, a bronze pin, a bronze clip and an ivory ring with associated objects or iron and bronze – possibly remains of a bag and its contents – which was found by the waist. It was thought the burials were C5th but

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the bag is usually found in late C7th or early C8th contexts. The burial site is just outside the banks of the Roman town of Sorvodunium/Old Sarum, and therefore near the convergence of several roads. Battle of *Searobyrg*/Old Sarum took place in AD 552 and it was captured by Cynric, according to the ASC. A burh was later built in the centre of the Iron Age hillfort.

References: Fowler 1970, 53; Smith 1970, 208; Cherryson 2005b, 168–9

Roche Court Down Barrow 1, SU251357

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: linear earthwork. Indirectly associated: field system

The smaller of two adjacent mounds excavated by Stone (1932) was interpreted as a primary 'Anglo-Saxon' 'cenotaph'-type barrow with a small flint-covered circular pit at the centre. A roughly cut circular ditch surrounded the cist within the confines of the barrow, there being no outer ditch. A few small charcoal fragments and an 'Anglo-Saxon' sherd were found.

References: Stone 1932; Meaney 1964, 273; Geake 1997, 187; Cherryson 2005b, 169

Roche Court Down Barrow 2, SU252357

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow; linear earthwork. Indirectly associated: field system

A ditchless bowl barrow, the larger of 2 adjacent barrows excavated by Stone (1932). In the centre was a possibly primary male inhumation in a large grave covered with a thin layer of turf; the cist was then filled with flint nodules. A small C6th iron knife in scabbard, 2 pieces of iron (possibly buckle or clasp) and sheep bones (leg) were found with the burial.

References: Stone 1932; Meaney 1964, 273; Geake 1997, 187; Cherryson 2005b, 169

Roche Court Down Barrow 3, SU252357

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: linear earthwork. Indirectly associated: field system

A ditched barrow, of a different construction to other Roche Court Down barrows – chalk rubble rather than earth – was excavated by Stone (1932) but had been disturbed in the C19th. Two burials were found, 1 interpreted as primary, 1 as secondary. The secondary inhumation, possibly 'Saxon', lay 1ft (c. 0.3m) beneath the surface at the centre. The primary burial was in a cist at the centre with the remains of a Middle Bronze Age cinerary urn. This burial was also disturbed and contained bones from the secondary burial.

References: Meaney 1964, 273; Stone 1932; Geake 1997, 187

Roche Court Down Execution Cemetery, SU251357

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: linear earthwork. Indirectly associated: field system

A cemetery of 18 skeletons, 15 male, of which? 9 decapitated, 4 with wrists bound behind backs. Heavy flints lay above many of the interments. All were buried in the ditch of WSHER SU23NE604, excavated by Stone. Reynolds (2009, 58) says that Stone's discovery of the decapitated skeletons associated with a linear earthwork 'led to the recognition that there was an emerging group of sites with evidence of executions and that these were associated with earthworks, such as barrows and ditches', although he points out that Stone attributed the burials to 'Saxons' killed by Romano-Britons.

References: Stone 1932; Cunnington 1933, 157; Grinsell 1957, 128, 260(ditch); Meaney 1964, 273; Musty and Stratton 1964, 86; Cherryson 2005b, 169; Reynolds 2009

Roche Court Down Flat Cemetery, SU251358

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: linear earthwork. Indirectly associated: field system

Thirteen AS graves, containing 16 individuals, to N of the barrows, all aligned roughly E-W with rounded ends. No indications of wood lining or pottery found and the only grave-goods were 2 C6th iron knives and the leg of an ox.

References: Stone 1932; Meaney 1964, 273; Geake 1997, 187; Cherryson 2005b, 169-70

Rodmead Hill, ST819359

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: saucer barrow. Indirectly associated: bowl barrows; enclosure
A Bronze Age saucer barrow situated to the SE of Rodmead Farm. The barrow is one of 2 saucer barrows on Rodmead Hill. According to Scheduled Monument records (1998), it survives as an earthwork 10m in diameter and 0.3m high, surrounded by a shallow ditch 1.8m wide and an outer bank 2.7m wide. Excavations by Colt Hoare in 1807 revealed an extended inhumation, with the head to the NE, accompanied by a bronze bowl with wooden exterior, a bronze buckle or clasp, a 'sugar-loaf' shield boss, iron sword, 2 iron knives and 2 iron spearheads. Hoare suggests that the interred individual might be a 'Belgic warrior', but the grave-goods indicate a C7th or early 8th date. Finds are in the Wiltshire Museum.

References: Hoare 1812, 46-7, Plate IV; Cunnington 1933, 159; Grinsell 1957, 223(6); Meaney 1964, 273; Geake 1997, 187; Cherryson 2005b, 170; Draper 2006, 155

Roundway Hill 3, SU019643

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: unidentified round barrow

A round barrow interpreted as primary early medieval (NMR SU 06 SW 4) or Bronze Age (WSHER SU06SW600) (the former is likely) on Roundway Hill, adjacent to the modern parish boundary with Roundway (and the ancient ?tithing boundary with St James). Excavated by William Cunnington Sr. in 1805, who found a W-E inhumation, accompanied by an iron ring, 30 ivory gaming pieces and a possible shield boss. Opened again in 1855 by William Cunnington Jr., and a disinterred (possibly

by Cunnington Sr.) skeleton was recovered. Identified by Thurnam as male, c. 50-year-old and Roman or later.

References: Hoare 1821a, 98; Cunnington 1860, 159–61; 1933, 159–60; Grinsell 1957, 42, 157(40a); Meaney 1964, 273–4; Bonney 1966, 29; Eagles 2001, 223; Geake 1997, 187; Cherryson 2005b, 170; Draper 2006, 144

Roundway Hill 6, SU015648

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: double barrow

Described by W. Cunnington Jr. (1860) as an 'irregular oval, with an indistinct hour-glass contraction in the middle', these 2 conjoined round barrows were opened by Cunnington and Mr Coward in the 1850s. Excavation of the W mound revealed a wooden coffin containing burnt bones and a bronze dagger with 3 rivets. The E mound (5b) contained a primary cremation with 2 grooved whetstones, a plain whetstone, a barbed and tanged arrowhead, a flint knife and a bronze dagger. There was also a burial close to the surface, interpreted by Cunnington (1960) as 'certainly a secondary interment', which is of probable Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date.

References: Cunnington 1860, 262–4; Grinsell 1957, 189(5a+b); Geake 1997, 187; Semple 2003, 84–5; Cherryson 2005b, 170–1

Roundway Hill 7, SU005647

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow

Bronze Age bowl barrow excavated several times: in 1840 by Lord Colston and Stoughton Money, and in 2001 by Sarah Semple and Howard Williams. Excavations in 1840 located a central early medieval interment. This was an extended female 'high-status' inhumation, accompanied by grave-goods including a cabochon garnet and gold necklace, a composite gold pin-suite and a yew-wood bucket with bronze fittings. All were contained within an iron-bound wooden coffin or chest. It may have been a bed burial, and is comparable with the Swallowcliffe Down burial. The original Bronze Age burial (in central square chamber) was removed or destroyed in the early medieval period, and the chamber possibly enlarged. A further contemporary Bronze Age adult burial was placed in a crouched position on the chalk floor of the NW terminal of the inner ditch. A much later crouched juvenile burial was found in the upper fill of the SW terminal of the inner ditch. Two further Bronze Age cremations were inserted – in the outer ditch and in the NW terminal of the inner ditch (next to the early medieval adult). The central chamber had been disturbed at an unknown time after 1840. The necklace and bucket are in Wiltshire Museum.

References: Cunnington 1860, 164–6; Meaney 1964, 273–4; Grinsell 1957, 99, 188(1); Bonney 1966, 29; Speake 1989, 107; Geake 1997, 187; Semple and Williams 2001; Cherryson 2005b, 171; Draper 2006, 159

Sherrington Long Barrow, ST968391

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: long barrow

A long barrow composed (chiefly) of gravel (Colt Hoare 1812, 100; Lambert 1806, 344), excavated by William Cunnington in 1804, and again by the Rev A. Fane and Thurnam in 1856. Four N–S interments were found by Cunnington: a skeleton with a spearhead at the E end and a skeleton of a stout man with a sword to his right, and above this, a spearhead. To his upper left lay a shield boss, iron buckle, piece of leather, perforated strip of brass and strip of silver. Also to the left was a knife and pieces of corroded iron. To the E and also orientated E–W was an adult inhumation and a child. Four further unaccompanied burials were found by Thurnam.

References: Lambert 1806, 344–6; Hoare 1812, 100; Cunnington 1914, 399, 413; Grinsell 1957, 105, 143(1); Bonney 1966, 29; Eagles 2001, 209; Cherryson 2005b, 173; Draper 2006, 160

Shrewton, SU065444

Pays: Salisbury Plain

An extended skeleton was found when Shrewton windmill was erected prior to 1812 (mentioned by Colt Hoare 1812, 174). The inhumation was accompanied by a knife, a 'drinking cup' and 2 open worked bronze girdle ornaments. In 1968, an excavation for Salisbury Museum recovered the inhumation burial of an adult female in a shallow grave. The only associated object was a circular gold bracteate with a 'bead border enclosing the stylized figure of a bearded and belted seated male grasping an animal in each hand. An identical bracteate from Risley, Kent, belongs to the early C7th' (Wilson and Hurst 1969). The burial may be associated with a cemetery.

References: Hoare 1812, 174; Thurnam 1871, 286; Cunnington 1933, 169–70; Grinsell 1957, 106; Meaney 1964, 276; Smith 1969, 128; Wilson and Hurst 1969, 241; Geake 1997, 188; Eagles 2001, 209; Cherryson 2005b, 173; Draper 2006, 160

Silk Hill, SU187469

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: bell barrow

A secondary inhumation, accompanied by a spearhead or arrowhead, was discovered when a bell barrow, 'the loftiest and most conspicuous tumulus on the hill' (Hoare 1812, 194) – probably WSHR SU14NE705 – was excavated prior to 1812 by William Cunnington. The grave-goods (small socketed iron lancehead or spearhead placed near head) suggest an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date. Three skeletons were found here or in SU14NE729 in 1941.

References: Hoare 1812, 194; Goddard 1913, 289; Cunnington 1933, 162, 165; Grinsell 1957, 183(7); Meaney 1964, 276; Cherryson 2005b, 174; Draper 2006, 156

St Edmund's College/Church, SU147303

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

An Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery of 20–30 inhumations was found in 1771–4 by Mr H. P. Wyndham when levelling a portion of the city rampart to the E of St Edmund's College. Finds included shield bosses, knives, bucket mounts and spearheads.

References: Cunnington 1933, 155–6; Grinsell 1957, 102; Meaney 1964, 275; Eagles 2001, 206; Cherryson 2005b, 172–3; Draper 2006, 159

Stanton Fitzwarren, SU188905

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

A ?C7th burial with a tanged iron knife was found during the digging of a pond at 'Van Diemen's Land', on the parish boundary with Highworth, in 1906. Marked on 2nd revision OS map.

References: Goddard 1913, 322; Grinsell 1957, 106; Meaney 1964, 276; Bonney 1966, 29; Geake 1997, 188; Eagles 2001, 222; Cherryson 2005b, 175; Draper 2006, 160

Stonehenge, SU122421

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: henge monument

A decapitated skeleton was discovered in 1923 by William Hawley to the N of the South Barrow at Stonehenge, during a programme of excavations between 1919 and 1926. It was one of 3 skeletons discovered during these excavations and the only one thought to be still extant. The remains were initially thought to have been destroyed by wartime bombs, but were rediscovered in 1999. Hawley thought the skeleton predated Stonehenge, as the fill of the grave was pure chalk, devoid of extraneous material. Radiocarbon analysis conducted in 2001 showed it to be C7th, although retesting has recently been performed, producing a younger date by c. 100 years – the calibrated date range is now AD 660–890 at 95% probability (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). The grave was slightly too short for the individual, and aligned ENE–WSW, probably with the head to ENE. Judged by McKinley and Boylston to be a male of c. 28–32 years who was 5' 4.5" (1.65m) in height – just below average for contemporary cemeteries in the area. He had been decapitated by a single blow from the rear-right.

References: Pitts *et al.* 2002; Cherryson 2005b, 175–6; Draper 2006, 142; Hamilton *et al.* 2007

Strawberry Hill, ST9952

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Sporadic finds during first half of C19th, including black glass bead with chevron pattern in white inlay (possibly in Wiltshire Museum), sword and human bones, indicate the presence of possible early medieval burial in the vicinity of Knowtham Pond (near Strawberry Hill).

References: Goddard 1913, 222; Cunnington 1933, 172; Grinsell 1957, 74; Meaney 1964, 267; Bonney 1966, 28; Cherryson 2005b, 155–6; Draper 2006, 152

Swallowcliffe Down, ST966254

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow

A barrow was excavated in 1966 by Major Lance Vatcher and his wife, Faith de Mallet Vatcher, on behalf of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works. Beneath the mound of an Early Bronze Age barrow was a complex, partially robbed, secondary young adult female interment of C7th date. The burial was exceptionally high-status, being accompanied by a range of items that included an iron-bound bucket, an elaborate satchel and a maplewood casket containing a bronze sprinkler, silver spoon and other objects. See Speake (1989) and Williams (2006, 27–35) for further details.

References: Grinsell 1957, 205; Speake 1989; Geake 1997, 188; Cherryson 2005b, 176–7; Draper 2006, 161; Williams 2006

'The Fox', Purton, SU103871

Pays: Corallian–Gault–Greensand Belt

A Saxon inhumation cemetery excavated during quarrying activities opposite The Fox, Purton. The skeletons were dug out at various times between 1900 and 1925, and perhaps later (Grinsell 1957). One excavated in 1900 was accompanied by 3 coloured glass beads (lost). Three or 4 were excavated by Cunnington and Goddard in 1912, accompanied by: iron seax, blue glass bead and probable remains of 2 iron knives; split socketed spearhead; and oyster shell and tanged iron knife. Two more skeletons were dug out by C. H. Gore of Swindon Museum in 1925, accompanied by an iron socketed spearhead, iron knife and bone pin. Other graves (details unknown) yielded the split socketed iron spearhead, 2 iron seaxes and 2 iron knives described by Cunnington and Goddard (1912).

References: Cunnington and Goddard 1912; Grinsell 1957, 98; Meaney 1964, 272; Geake 1997, 186; Cherryson 2005b, 168

Thornhill Lane, SU090772

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow

Interments interpreted as intrusive were found in a Bronze Age bowl barrow in 1834/6. Finds include iron spearhead/arrowhead, amber and glass beads and fragment of glass bottle. C6th? Amber not common in area until then (White 1988, 17). Finds may be in the Wiltshire Museum.

References: Anon. 1860, 256; 1897, 86; Cunnington 1933, 163; Grinsell 1957, 58; Meaney 1964, 266–7; Bonney 1966, 29; Eagles 2001, 212; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 231; Semple 2003, 86; Cherryson 2005b, 145; Draper 2006, 148

Tilshead Lodge Long Barrow, SU021475

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: long barrow

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Neolithic long barrow, designated 'Tilshead 5' by Grinsell. Excavations by Cunnington revealed a superficial skeleton and Thurnam located another superficial inhumation with grave-goods including shield and copper alloy-bound wooden bucket.

References: Thurnam 1869, 180–96; Goddard 1913, 332; Cunnington 1914, 402–3; 1933, 165; Grinsell 1957, 114, 144; Meaney 1964, 277; Cook 2004, 104; Cherryson 2005b, 178; Draper 2006, 162

Walker's Hill, SU115636

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow. Indirectly associated: linear earthwork

The 'intrusive' extended burials of a woman and an infant were discovered when a bowl barrow at the foot of Knap Hill was excavated in the 1850s by Thurnam. It is the furthest SW of a group of 3 tumuli, the other 2 of which are joined by a pillow mound. They lie alongside an 'old British trackway which stretches by Avebury to Berkshire' (Thurnam 1860). Thurnam described the infant as 'carelessly buried' in the centre, while the tall woman was to the W, in a narrow cist, feet to E. No grave-goods were found, and Thurnam notes that the other 2 barrows were defaced, so the mound may have been robbed. Thurnam suggests that the older barrow might 'under peculiar circumstances' have been 'used for the interment of a woman and child in mediaeval times'. He speculates, 'might it not be the case of some unhappy infanticide or suicide, who, excluded from the graveyard of the village church, had been taken for interment to this pagan burying place on the hill?' Obviously this interpretation implies a conversion or post-conversion period context. The lack of grave-goods and the W–E orientation would indeed fit in with this idea of punishment or exclusion, but it is possible that the burials are earlier, or that they had originally been accompanied. A C7th gilt pyramidal stud, inlaid with niello (probably a sword fitting) was found 'near Adam's Grave' (Reynolds and Langlands 2006, 33). References: Thurnam 1860, 326; Grinsell 1957, 149(6); Cherryson 2005b, 179–80

Warren Hill, SU242485

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: linear earthwork; field system

In 1992, soldiers digging a trench found human remains. They informed Entwistle, who undertook a rescue excavation, uncovering the remains of 3 skeletons. The excavations were concluded later the same year by Härke and students from Reading University. Four skeletons (adult males), side-by-side, all buried at the same time, all with weapons. The grave was deemed to be mid-C6th by Härke and Entwistle (2002), although WSHR SU24NW400 says late C5th/early C6th, and Nenck *et al.* say late C6th/early C7th. The grave was situated at the end of a Roman/prehistoric lynchet, earthworks that form part of an extensive field system ('sherds of prehistoric and Roman pottery are present in the soil eroding from the cuttings' – Nenck *et al.* 1993).

References: Nenck *et al.* 1993, 287; Härke and Entwistle 2002; Cherryson 2005b, 154–5; Draper 2006, 162

West Chisenbury, SU136531

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Shallow grave contained extended burial orientated E–W found July 1928 in digging a pit in the garden of new houses at West Chisenbury. Near the head of the skeleton was a socketed iron spearhead. Other burials were found in the area when foundations for some cottages were dug.

References: Cunnington 1930, 84; Meaney 1964, 267; Bonney 1966, 28; Cherryson 2005b, 181

West Knoyle, ST863337

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow

Saxon inhumation with a 'fragmentary' Group 7 'sugar-loaf' shield boss with traces of silver rivets between the legs (Geake 1997, 188), and a spearhead and knife at the side, interpreted as intrusive. The burial was found within a bowl barrow opened by Cunnington/Hoare in 1807. Grinsell (1957, 119), however, states that it could be primary. There were 2 bowl barrows close together, the smaller of which contained the inhumation, the larger a cremation. He reports, 'In the smallest of the two we discovered the skeleton of a robust man, extended on his back at full length in a large cist. Between his knees was the iron umbo shield, exactly similar to the one before described on Rodmead down; on his left side was a spear-head of the same metal, about seven inches long, and not quite an inch wide; also an iron knife. The articles found in this barrow, as well as the mode of interment, mark it to be of the same era as the one at Rodmead' (Hoare 1812, 48). A later C7th date is suggested by the finds. References: Hoare 1812, 48; Grinsell 1957, 119, 195(1b); Meaney 1964, 270; Geake 1997, 188; Cherryson 2005b, 181–2; Draper 2006, 164

Winkelbury Hill Barrow 1, ST950212

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow. Indirectly associated: hillfort

The 'most easterly' of the barrows, and the first excavated by Pitt Rivers. It is described as large, with ditch and causeway. An large E–W oblong grave, 3ft 6in deep in the chalk was found in the centre, and within the grave at each of the 4 corners were found stake holes. At the undisturbed E end of the grave were irons which Pitt Rivers took to be clamps from a coffin. Bronze Age interment not found but implied by the finding of Bronze Age sherds in the mound and a bronze awl in the silting of the causeway across ditch and bank at E.

References: Pitt Rivers 1888, 257–9, 286; Grinsell 1957, 223; Meaney 1964, 277; Cherryson 2005b, 183

Winkelbury Hill Barrow 2, ST950212

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bowl barrow. Indirectly associated: hillfort

Appendix

An 'intrusive' extended interment with a tanged iron knife was excavated near the surface of a bowl barrow with slight ditch and causeway (WSHER ST92SE612) by Pitt Rivers. In the centre of the barrow was an oblong grave with upright sides, paved with tabular flints on the bottom, sloping slightly from E-W. There were 2 interments within the grave – 1 interpreted as primary, 'scattered through the soil', and another interpreted as secondary, a male, lying supine with head to W. There were fragments of 'British pottery' (Meaney 1964, 277).

References: Pitt Rivers 1888, 257–9, 286; Grinsell 1957, 156(6b); Meaney 1964, 277; Geake 1997, 188; Cherryson 2005b, 184; Draper 2006, 144

Winkelbury Hill Cemetery, ST950212

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: bowl barrow; hillfort

The discovery of a probable intrusive 'Saxon' burial in a Bronze Age barrow by Pitt Rivers in 1881–2 led to a thorough examination of the surrounding ground and it was discovered that there were a number of long, narrow depressions visible in the turf. Excavation revealed a cemetery of 31 'Saxon' inhumation burials in shallow graves, of which 26 skeletons were oriented with heads to the W; 2 to the E (both children). The majority of burials were supine extended, although a number of individuals were interred on their sides. Six iron knives, a bronze pin, 2 bronze discs, a buckle and 3 glass beads were among the finds. One grave contained iron rods and open work fittings, perhaps from a chatelaine or satchel. Three of the graves contained no skeleton.

References: Pitt Rivers 1888, 257–9, 286; Cunnington 1933, 152–3; Grinsell 1957, 40; Meaney 1964, 277–8; Eagles 2001, 219; Geake 1997, 188; Cherryson 2005b, 183–4; Draper 2006, 144

Winterbourne Gunner, SU182352

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: pond barrow

In 1960, 3 graves were uncovered while digging a pipe trench. A further 7 graves were subsequently located and excavated by Salisbury Museum. In 1992, a sword was discovered during the construction of 2 bungalows some 30m from the burials discovered in 1960. Excavation located a further 23 graves, with only those graves directly affected by the construction work being fully excavated. Later the same year, a further 24 graves were fully excavated prior to the construction work on an adjacent property. A further 21 burials were located between 1992 and 1994, while watching briefs by AC Archaeology and Wilts County Council staff monitored the installation of water pipes and electricity cables, and during the construction of a garage belonging to one of the properties. Only those directly threatened by the building work were fully excavated. Time Team reported on work done in 1994 which revealed the graves of 2 adult females and 1 child which had been placed around the edge of the site of a Bronze Age pond barrow (see WSHER SU13NE660 and SU13NE661). Several Bronze Age cremation urns were also found. They reported that there was a prehistoric focus to the cemetery, and detected several

further previously unrecorded barrows by aerial survey. In 1997, an additional 7 burials, 4 of which were fully excavated, were located prior to the construction of a bungalow on land adjacent to the properties excavated in 1992. In total, 85 graves have been located between 1960 and 1997, of which 37 have been excavated. The majority of the graves are orientated W–E and contain supine extended burials, although at least 2 were orientated S–N and 1 of the burials was prone. Many of the burials contained grave-goods. While detailed analysis of the grave-goods from the graves excavated in 1990s has yet to be completed, they appear, like those excavated in 1960, to date from the 5th and 6th.

References: Meaney 1964, 278; Musty and Stratton 1964; Eagles 1994, 13–15; 2001, 206, 218; Taylor 1995; Cherryson 2005b, 184–5; Draper 2006, 165

Winterbourne Stoke 1, SU076420

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: disc barrow

A probable early medieval inhumation with an iron knife was excavated by Hoare in 1809, in the central mound of disc barrow SU04SE651. He located a primary cremation, which he interpreted as having been disturbed by the inhumation. The mound is part of Winterbourne Stoke West Barrow Cemetery (SU 04 SE 23), which comprises 12 barrows, and is surrounded and disturbed by a ?medieval enclosure, The Coniger (SU 04 SE 83).

References: Hoare 1812, 113; Goddard 1913, 368; Cunington 1933, 166; Grinsell 1957, 127, 221 (61); Meaney 1964, 278; Cherryson 2005b, 185; Draper 2006, 166

Winterbourne Stoke 2, SU103422

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: disc barrow

A small disc barrow, opened in 1809 by Cunington/Hoare. A rectangular cist, presumed to be a later intrusion, containing a few fragments of burnt bone and a large glass bead, was found. The barrow exhibited evidence of having been opened before, perhaps robbed. The glass bead raises the possibility that the barrow once contained an early medieval burial (Cherryson 2005b). The bead was similar to one found by Pitt Rivers at Winklebury Hill, so presumed 'Saxon'.

References: Hoare 1812, 119; Goddard 1913, 369; Grinsell 1957, 127, 201 (23a); Meaney 1964, 278; Cherryson 2005b, 185; Draper 2006, 166

Winterbourne Stoke 3, SU101416

Pays: Salisbury Plain

Directly associated: bell barrow

Five unaccompanied burials near the surface of a Bronze Age bell barrow (SU14SW820) opened by Cunington/Hoare, interpreted as early medieval. A primary cremation was also found.

References: Hoare 1812, 122; Grinsell 1957, 127, 212 (4); Meaney 1964, 278; Cherryson 2005b, 185; Draper 2006, 166

Winterslow Hut, SU228353

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: bell barrow

A skeleton, thought to be intrusive early medieval, was found when a barrow was opened by Rev. A. B. Hutchins in 1814, with parts of a shield, a spearhead, a buckle and a bucket with bronze mountings. The mound is designated Idmiston 23 by Grinsell and is part of the Winterslow Hut Barrow Group. It is apparently the largest bell barrow in Wiltshire.

References: Cunington 1933, 166–7; Grinsell 1957, 78, 210(23); Meaney 1964, 279; Bonney 1966, 29

Winterslow SE of the Pheasant, SU234348

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Indirectly associated: unidentified round barrows

A skeleton with a circular bronze brooch and sword scabbard found by Akerman in 1870. Barrow group 300m to NW.

References: Cunington 1933, 157, 170; Grinsell 1957, 128; Meaney 1964, 278; Cherryson 2005b, 185–6; Draper 2006, 166

Witherington Ring, SU184251

Pays: South Wiltshire Downs

Directly associated: enclosure; field system

A N–S inhumation burial was found in the bank of a lynchet while a ferret was being dug out in 1874. It was accompanied by a long two-edged sword with a decorated pommel, shield boss, knife, ferrule, and strike-a-light. Some large flat stones were laid over it. There was reported to be a barrow containing human remains around 18m away (see Meaney 1964). Identification of the shield boss may provide a tighter date range.

References: Cunington 1933, 170; Grinsell 1957, 23; Meaney 1964, 279; Bonney 1966, 29; Eagles 2001, 209; Cherryson 2005b, 186; Draper 2006, 142

Woodbridge Inn, SU132570

Pays: Vale of Pewsey

Indirectly associated: unidentified round barrow

In 1935, 2 skeletons were uncovered during road widening work at Woodbridge Inn, North Newnton. The site lies 100m SW of the course of the Salisbury Avon river. The skeletons are thought to have lain close together with their heads to the W, on the S side of the road to Pewsey. Several blackened stones had been placed at the W end of the grave. The burials were accompanied by a shield boss and spearhead. 'While no evidence of other graves could be identified in aerial photographs the cropmarks of [possible] Bronze Age ring ditches were seen close to the site of the Anglo-Saxon burials. It is possible that these Bronze Age monuments were visible in the Anglo-Saxon period and acted as a focus for burial' (NMR SU 15 NW 7).

References: Cunnington 1935; Grinsell 1957, 91; Meaney 1964, 279; Bonney 1966, 29; Cherryson 2005b, 186–7; Draper 2006, 156

Yatesbury I, SU068713

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: unidentified round barrow

An inhumation burial was discovered in a barrow at Yatesbury prior to 1743 by Mr Bray of Yatesbury (Stukeley 1743). The skeleton was lain in a stone coffin, below a large stone, just below the surface of the barrow. The body lay in a stone-lined grave and was accompanied by a gold ring, spearheads and a piece of brass.

References: Stukeley 1743, 45; Smith 1879, 334; Grinsell 1957, 56; Meaney 1964, 279; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 231; Cherryson 2005b, 187; Draper 2006, 147

Yatesbury II, SU070709

Pays: Marlborough Downs

Directly associated: double barrow

In c. 1833, 2 skeletons were discovered when a double barrow was lowered in Barrow Field to the S of Yatesbury. The burials (in the southernmost mound) were accompanied by a cylindrical metal 'workbox', with lid and chain, 3 terracotta beads, and a large knife or seax. The box has been dated to the late C7th and is taken to indicate a high-status female burial (Draper 2006, 147). The barrow was later dug in 1849 by Merewether, who found a 'primary' cremation deposit.

References: Smith 1879, 331–3; Cunnington 1933, 167; Grinsell 1957, 55, 165; Meaney 1964, 279; Geake 1997, 188; Pollard and Reynolds 2002, 231; Cherryson 2005b, 187–8; Draper 2006, 147

Hampshire

Alton, SU718388

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Over 70 burials were found during building work in 1960 and 1961. The burials were Early Anglo-Saxon in date and an extensive range of grave-goods were retrieved. Several further inhumation burials and a possible cremation have since been found. References: Cherryson 2005b, 47; Evison 1988; Geake 1997, 153; Meaney 1964, 94

Bargates, SZ157930

Pays: Avon and Stour Valleys

Directly associated: ring-ditches (barrows)

A trial trench was excavated in 1977, revealing a Bronze Age ring-ditch and 7 early medieval burials. An area of 1900m² was excavated the following year, bringing to total number of early medieval inhumation graves to 30 and revealing 4 cremations. A penannular ditch was also identified around one of the early medieval graves. The

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skeletal preservation was very poor, and many inhumations were identified only on the basis of grave-goods, which included knives, weapons and a single bead.

References: Jarvis 1983

Bevis's Grave, SU692064

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: long barrow

Excavations in 1815 revealed 3 inhumations, possibly early medieval, near the surface. In the mid 1970s, 71 graves containing 88 individuals were located within and next to the southern ditch. Two of the graves were orientated S–N, and the rest were W–E. Most were supine and extended but 6 lay on their sides. Twenty were accompanied by grave-goods, mainly knives and buckles, but including a part of a hanging bowl escutcheon. Radiocarbon dating of 5 of the inhumations indicates the cemetery originated in the C7th and continued in use into the C9th and C10th. References: Meaney 1964, 94; Rudkin 1976; 2001; Geake 1997, 154; 1999, 6; Cherryson 2005b, 48

Broughton Down, SU308317

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: round barrows

A N–S inhumation, with a spearhead, knife and shield boss, was found in 1875.

References: Meaney 1964, 95; Cherryson 2005b, 49

Brown Candover, SU586397

Pays: Hampshire Downs

In 1959, an inhumation burial was found at the edge of a disused gravel pit accompanied by a seax, which may be pre-AD 450.

References: Meaney 1964, 95; Geake 1997, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 49

Chalton Peak, SU734160

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: settlement/enclosure

The N–S inhumation burial of a female, with early medieval pottery in the grave fill, was excavated in the early 2000s, following the discovery of weapons and other items through metal detecting, and the outlines of graves through geophysical survey. Excavation also revealed the edge of another possible grave.

References: Keyte 2003

Clifford Street (Southampton SOU 32, 47 and 519), SU425121

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

An inhumation cemetery and possible church were excavated at Clifford Street in 1968/69. Ten graves containing human remains were found, along with 6 probable

graves (the preservation of bone in some of the certain graves was poor). One grave was surrounded by a penannular ditch. A series W sceatta dating to c. AD 700–715 was found in the fill of one of the graves.

References: Morton 1992a; Cherryson 2005b, 70

Cook Street, Southampton, SU424116

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Numerous projects have taken place in the Cook Street area since 1986. A Middle Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery was found during excavations in 1986/89 (SOU 254), 1994 (SOU 567) and 1997/98 (SOU 823). Other investigations have been conducted on the other side of Chapel Street (SOU 407/523) as well as a watching brief on Chapel Road (SOU 630). At least 22 inhumations have been uncovered, 3 of which were surrounded by penannular ditches; 14 were not. Two skeletons and 2 skulls were found in a boundary ditch just W of the graves. A fourth penannular ditch appeared to be 'empty' (no grave within it). The full extent of the cemetery is unknown. The boundary ditch was possibly the first Middle Anglo-Saxon feature in the area, closely followed by the cemetery. After the cemetery went out of use, the area seems to have remained relatively undisturbed, perhaps because the cemetery was still respected. The cemetery probably dates to early C8th (3 of the skeletons were radiocarbon dated).

References: Garner and Vincent 1997; Garner 1993; 2001; Cherryson 2005b, 65–6

Dolly's Firs, SU669262

Pays: Hampshire Downs

'A "Jutish" buckle plate was found, with other objects now lost, during the making of the West Meon Privett road, c. 1842. It was purchased in 1936, for the Winchester City Museum, from Mr. Frank Ford, grandson of Mr. Richard Ford, a road surveyor and a member of the Turnpike Trust, who lived at Turnpike House, Bramdean. The material is bronze-gilt forming a rectangle 1.4" x 1", with a central garnet setting. The border of animal pattern is in good Style I and has two animals' (NMR SU 62 NE 15). The exact location is unknown. O. G. S. Crawford (see NMR entry) suggests that it could have come from barrow SU 62 NE 17, but this was later noted as probably being a natural mound.

References: Hooley 1937; Meaney 1964, 98; Stoodley and Stedman 2001, 132

Droxford, SU612184

Pays: Hampshire Downs

The cemetery was first located in 1900 during the construction of the Fareham–Alton railway. William Dale, a local antiquarian, recovered many objects which are in the British and Winchester museums. The artefacts were dated at the time to the first half of the C5th. Very few written records of the discovery survive. Survey in 1973 revealed that the original ground surface level had almost completely been removed by road, rail and housing works. Excavations in 1974 on a narrow strip of land adjoining the S side of the railway station revealed 40 graves, each containing

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1 extended inhumation, and a total of nearly 400 grave-goods, including a bronze-mounted bucket and numerous Roman items. There was 1 prone burial (Grave 7). References: Dale 1903; 1906; Meaney 1964, 97; Aldsworth 1978; Cook 2004, 58–9; Cherryson 2005b, 50

Fareham I, SU577071

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Two early medieval cremation urns were found prior to 1880 near Old Turnpike Road, Fareham. They were dated stylistically to the mid–late C6th.

References: Meaney 1964, 97; Hawkes 1969; Cherryson 2005b, 51

Fareham II, SU590074

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: round barrow

A possible round barrow at the top of Clapper Hill Quarry was investigated in 1926 by Colonel Cooke. In the lower layers of the feature were 2 inhumations and a flint tool. These inhumations were overlain by a small early medieval cemetery. Further human bone representing c. 11 individuals was found below the section in the quarry in 1969.

References: Meaney 1964, 97; Hawkes 1969; Cherryson 2005b, 51

Farley Chamberlayne, SU403286

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: field systems

Two skeletons (1 destroyed, 1 recovered) were discovered while troops were digging trenches c. 1914. The skeleton of a 45–50-year-old was found with a carinated iron shield boss, ‘similar to those of a Saxon date’. The site overlies ‘Celtic’ field systems.

References: Meaney 1964, 97–8; Cherryson 2005b, 51–2

Golden Grove (Southampton SOU 34, 43 and 48), SU427118

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Evidence for a Middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found during 3 investigations at the S end of the Golden Grove area (SOU 34, SOU 43, SOU 48). In the C19th, human bone, 9–10 bronze ‘keys’, pins and a green glass palm cup were found (SOU 48). At least 5 individuals were found in 1961 (SOU 43) and 3 further interments in 1962 (SOU 34). All of these burials are thought to belong to the same cemetery.

References: Morton 1992a, 193, 207; Geake 1997, 155–6; Cherryson 2005b, 71–2

Hamwic (Southampton SOU 7 and 14), SU428116

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Remains of a possible early medieval cemetery have been recorded during excavations within the site of *Hamwic* (SOU 7, 14 and 630). The first group of burials com-

prised the disarticulated remains of at least 2 inhumations recovered from Middle Anglo-Saxon pits, and an E–W sub-rectangular feature 1.4m in length interpreted as a grave. Another burial, indicated by the discovery of the lower part of a single W–E grave, was found 47m from the first group. It is not known whether these discoveries represent isolated burials, the remains of 2 separate small cemeteries or 1 larger cemetery. Two additional inhumations were excavated during a watching brief on the installation of parking meters along Chapel Road (SOU 630). Both burials were radiocarbon dated: 1 to the C8th–9th, the other to the C10th–early C11th. These burials may represent part of a cemetery attached to the church of St Mary's which was in use from the C9th until the post-medieval period (Cherryson 2005b, 69).

References: Morton 1992a, 85, 152; Cherryson 2005b, 69

Huckles Bridge, SU152106

Pays: Avon and Stour Valleys

A single grass-tempered cremation urn found was during road widening in 1926–7, near to the ecclesiastical parish boundary between Fordingbridge and Ibsley. A C5th or C6th SFB, associated with a Bronze Age ring-ditch, was discovered nearby in the 1980s.

References: Davies and Graham 1984

Iford Bridge, SZ138933

Pays: Avon and Stour Valleys

A cremation in an early medieval urn was found under a sarsen in 1933 or 1938.

References: Reed 1947; Meaney 1964, 94

Itchen Abbas, SU536330

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: pond barrow

A cemetery was discovered during the laying of a gas pipeline through the playing field of Itchen Abbas school, and Winchester Museums Service carried out a small-scale rescue excavation in October 1984 which recorded 20 inhumation burials, mostly E–W. There were no visible traces of coffins or of other grave furnishings. One N–S burial, which had been damaged during trench cutting, was fully excavated. It contained the supine extended skeleton of a male, accompanied by the only grave-goods: an iron sword, an iron socketed spearhead, and an iron knife, together with a bronze chape and 2 bronze belt fittings. These were thought to date from the mid–late C5th (Youngs *et al.* 1985). In 1991, an archaeological assessment of the site to establish the extent of the cemetery was conducted prior to proposed development on the site. Approximately 60 graves were revealed in plan, but were not excavated (McCulloch 1992). A watching brief in 1994 led to the discovery of an infant grave with a C5th vessel (Nenk *et al.* 1995). An evaluation at 'Sunnybank', <100m to the SSE, by Wessex Archaeology in 2010 revealed Bronze Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon features. A large circular cut feature c. 27m in diameter,

which appeared in all 4 trenches, was interpreted as a pond barrow. Prehistoric and Anglo-Saxon finds were made in the fill of the ditch and elsewhere. Three N-S aligned inhumation graves, 1 containing a cremation vessel, and all almost certainly of Romano-British date, were found close to the W side of the barrow in Trench 1. One definite and 2 possible E-W inhumation graves were found close to the S side of the barrow in Trench 2. A skeleton of possible Roman/early medieval date was identified within the circumference of the barrow. It was not fully excavated but was on a W-E alignment (head to W) and the incisors suggest that it was an adult. A darker grave fill was identified around the skeleton, possibly suggesting the presence of a coffin. A further skeleton was identified to the SW of the pond barrow; only half of the grave cut was exposed but it was on a N-S alignment (head to N). The presence of nails may, again, suggest the presence of a coffin.

References: Youngs *et al.* 1985, 180–1; McCulloch 1991; 1992; Nenck *et al.* 1995, 211; Cherryson 2005b, 53–4; Wessex Archaeology 2010

Itchen Farm, SU471260

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: settlement/enclosure; Roman road; trackway

Two C7th burials were discovered in 2006 during an evaluation by TVAS in advance of the construction of a new Park and Ride site. A Neolithic burial and Bronze Age and Iron Age–Roman settlement activity was also uncovered. One of the burials was next to a roundhouse, and both were aligned with Roman trackways.

References: Lewis and Preston 2012

Kingsland (Southampton SOU 36), SU424120

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

In 1946–50 a skeleton of an infant and other human remains were recorded. The remains are thought to represent part of a Middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery. The disarticulated remains of at least 2 individuals were discovered 10m from the original excavation in 1986 (Cherryson 2005b).

References: Morton 1992a, 48, 198; Cherryson 2005b, 72

Kingsland Square (Southampton SOU 1091), SU424119

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Middle Anglo-Saxon deposits were revealed during a watching brief and excavation at Kingsland Square in 2000–02 (SOU 1091). These included stake holes, postholes, a possible construction trench and a pit. There was a grave-like feature surrounded by a possible penannular ditch. The stake holes and postholes indicate the presence of structures but no buildings were discerned. Evidence for textile production and metalworking was also found.

References: Garner 2003

Lower Brook Street, Winchester, SU483295

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: other Roman building

Four parallel graves were found in 1971, each containing an inhumation burial; 1 was unfurnished, 1 had a small iron object and 1 had a small bronze buckle. The fourth was wearing an elaborate necklace with 2 collars, 1 made of gold, garnet and silver pendants and glass beads, the other made of about 27 silver rings (Geake 1997, 156). The necklace has been dated to the second part of the C7th, and the cemetery is thought to have been in use during the later C7th and early C8th (Cherryson 2005b, 83–4). A timber domestic building was constructed on the site in the later C8th (Geake 1997, 156). Roman remains were located beneath the Middle Anglo-Saxon levels, including a possible early Roman fort. Timber buildings of at least 3 phases belonging to the Flavian period were found. About the end of the C1st AD, the timber buildings were demolished and a N–S street was laid across them. A small square ‘Romano-Celtic’ temple was erected about AD 100. In the late C3rd the entire area, including the temple, was levelled and a workshop was built. This was rebuilt a number of times, possibly becoming a dwelling house. Occupation lasted well into the C5th and may have continued into the post-Roman period (NMR SU 42 NE 219).

References: Biddle 1972; 1975; Hawkes 1990; Geake 1997, 156; Cherryson 2005b, 83–4

Lower High Street I (Southampton SOU 161), SU419110

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

A possible Late Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery was indicated by the discovery of at least 3 burials during excavations in the Lower High Street in 1966 (SOU 161). These included the fragmentary remains of 2 males in a pit. Radiocarbon dating of 1 of the burials indicate an C8th–11th date (NMR SU 41 SW 264).

References: Platt 1975; Cherryson 2005b, 67

Lower High Street II (Southampton SOU 266 and 334), SU419110

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

In 1986–91, archaeological excavations took place on the W side of Lower High Street, on the street frontage in the grounds of St John’s School (SOU 266) (HHER). Radiocarbon dating of a human tooth suggested a date between the late C5th–7th. In 1957 a skeleton with grave-goods (glass beads) was recovered from the site of Poupart’s Warehouse (SOU 334), near to SOU 266. This suggests the presence of several burials and may indicate occupation of the area prior to the foundation of the late Saxon town (Cherryson 2005b, 67–8).

References: Cherryson 2005b, 67–8

Nether Wallop, SU289377

Pays: Hampshire Downs

A skeleton accompanied by a knife and spearhead was found at Brewery House Farm in 1957.

References: Meaney 1964, 101; Cherryson 2005b, 55–6

Oak Lodge, SU622086

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

An early medieval inhumation was reported near to Oak Lodge, Southwick. No further details are known.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 78

Old Dairy Cottage, SU472314

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: linear ditch; Roman road

In 1989, the construction and refurbishment of a barn at Old Dairy Cottage revealed a number of inhumation burials. They were recorded *in situ* and fully excavated in 1990, although the full extent of the cemetery was not established. The burials were mostly aligned with feet to the NE, following the line of the Roman road between *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester) and *Cunetio/Durocornovium*. They also overlay a ditch containing C1st–2nd pottery (possibly residual). No skulls were found articulated with the skeletons. Owing to the good bone preservation, severed and refitting neck vertebrae were recovered intact and evidence for traumatic blows on a clavicle bone and a jaw bone survive (Nenk *et al.* 1991). There were 17 inhumations from 15 graves, including 7 decapitations (Reynolds 2009, 120). Radiocarbon dates from two of the graves were 775–965 and 890–1020 at 95.4% probability (Cherryson 2005b, 85). A number of iron buckles found with the S–N burials, however, suggest a C7th date for at least that group.

References: McCulloch 1991; Nenck *et al.* 1991, 157–8; Geake 1997, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 84–5; Reynolds 2009, 119

Old Minster, Winchester, SU482293

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: other Roman buildings

A total of 748 inhumations were found at the Old Minster in the 1960s and 1970s. Some are thought to date from the C7th.

References: Kjølbye-Biddle 1992; Geake 1997, 156; Cherryson 2005b, 85; Kjølbye-Biddle and Biddle forthcoming

Oliver's Battery, SU459279

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: Iron Age/Roman enclosure

An inhumation was discovered when a trench was cut across the vallum at the NE corner of an Iron Age or Romano-British hilltop enclosure in August 1930. The inhumation was extended and orientated S–N, and was accompanied by a spearhead, bronze hanging bowl and seax with silver pommel. The grave-goods indicate a late C7th date.

References: Andrew and Smith 1931; Andrew 1934a; 1934b; Meaney 1964, 98–9; Geake 1997, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 57; Yorke 2010

Palm Hall and High House, Winchester, SU494293

Pays: Hampshire Downs

The HHER reports that ‘three inhumation burials with associated Saxon material have been discovered within the area centred at SU494293’. No further details could be found. An inhumation was discovered when a trench was cut across the vallum at the NE corner of an Iron Age or Romano-British hilltop enclosure in August 1930. The inhumation was extended, orientated S–N and was accompanied by a spearhead, bronze hanging bowl and seax with silver pommel. The grave-goods indicate a late C7th date.

References: Hampshire HER 27077

Popley, SU642540

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Two inhumations with heads to the N were found in July 1966 during building operations on the Popley I Estate, Basingstoke. A bone comb was found beneath the head of one together with a small bronze object (?coin). In November 1966 a third burial came to light and, in February 1967, a fourth. These were also extended with heads to the N but without grave-goods (NMR SU 65 SW 56). According to the HHER further burials have been found at SU64325407, SU64255404 and SU64235404.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 61–2

Portsdown Hill Long Barrow, SU666064

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: long barrow

During chalk digging near the Naval telegraph on Portsdown Hill in 1816, a Neolithic long barrow was opened and the remains of 12 individuals were recovered. The inhumations appear to have been in distinct graves with some graves containing more than one individual. One of the skulls contained the top of an iron pike and it has been suggested these burials may have been part of a war cemetery. No other artefacts or dating evidence was found with the burials, but given their location within a barrow an early medieval date is a possibility (Cherryson 2005b, 58).

References: Anon. 1816; Slight 1816; Corney 1967; Bradley and Lewis 1968; Geake 1997, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 58

Portsdown I – Cemetery, SU648065

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: Bronze Age cemetery

In 1948, 4 burials were discovered during road widening. Rescue excavations uncovered a further 2 graves. In 1956, 11 more graves were excavated prior to further road work, 8 of which were undamaged. In total, 17 graves containing 25 inhumations were recovered. Only 3 of the graves contained grave-goods, which included an iron knife, a buckle and a shield boss, which date the cemetery to the second half of the C7th. The graves were orientated W–E and stones were found at the sides of a number of the graves. A Bronze Age cremation and secondary burials were also uncovered during the excavation, suggesting the possible former presence of a barrow, which may have formed the focus for the early medieval cemetery.

References: Meaney 1964, 99; Corney 1967; Geake 1997, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 59

Portsdown II – George Inn, SU667063

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: Iron Age settlement

Iron Age settlement activity and 2 early medieval inhumations were found during excavations prior to roadworks E of the George Inn on Portsdown Hill in 1966. One of the inhumations was extended with the head to the W. Grave-goods of knives, buckles and a bucket were found, as were traces of a possible coffin. The grave-goods indicate a Middle Anglo-Saxon date. The other burial was situated c. 21m away and may have been decapitated. It has been suggested that these burials were probably outliers of the Portsdown Hill Long Barrow site (NMR SU 60 NE 13).

References: Bradley and Lewis 1968; Cherryson 2005b, 59

Portway East, SU343462

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: linear ditch. Indirectly associated: round barrows; Roman road; prehistoric trackway

A C5th–6th cemetery at Portway Industrial Estate, Andover, was excavated in 1974; 67 inhumations and 80 urned and un-urned cremations were located. Most of the inhumations were supine extended and orientated with the heads to the S. There were also 4 inhumations on their sides with legs flexed and 3 crouched inhumations. Grave-goods including brooches, pierced Roman coins, chatelaines, knives, buckles, beads, spearheads and shield bosses were recovered. Grave-goods accompanying the cremations included buckles and glass beads (NMR SU 34 NW 23). Two ‘decapitated’ males were found in a single grave and 1 ?female grave contained only a skull, while the grave-goods (beads and a knife) were at the other end of the grave (Reynolds 2009, 80). Grave 50 lay to the west of a boundary ditch of Iron Age origin that served as a limit for the other burials in the cemetery (Reynolds 2009, 201).

References: Cook and Dacre 1985; Cherryson 2005b, 60; Reynolds 2009

Portway West, SU337464

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: round barrow; prehistoric trackway. Indirectly associated: Iron Age settlement

A C7th cemetery was excavated in 1981 by Andover Archaeological Society (AAS) and Test Valley Archaeological Committee (TVAC). It is thought to be a successor to the Portway East cemetery. Four graves were concentrated around a Bronze Age round barrow, 11 around 1 penannular ditch and 2 around another. The penannular ditches were thought to be primary (Stoodley 2006).

References: Cook and Dacre 1985; Geake 1997, 154; Cherryson 2005b, 60; Stoodley 2006; 2007a

Pound House, Meonstoke, SU614201

Pays: Hampshire Downs

An excavation was carried out by University of Southampton Adult Education Course in June 1985. Two Early Anglo-Saxon skeletons were excavated from shallow chalk-cut graves orientated E–W. An iron buckle was found.

References: Hampshire HER 54735

Preshaw Farm, SU580241

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: round barrows

In 1870 a farm cart became embedded in a hollow in a trackway to the south of Wind Farm, in the manor of Preshaw and marked on the first edition OS map as Preshaw Farm. It appeared to have fallen into a grave, which was subsequently ‘excavated’ by Mr Walter Long of Corhampton House. The grave contained human remains, associated with two pendants on a gold chain; one was a ‘gold disc with interlace decoration and the other a gold-mounted cabochon garnet cut into a segmented, flower-like design’ (Geake 1997, 154). A date of around AD 600 was suggested. Four bowl barrows within 150m to N. Next to parish boundary, although the boundary follows the natural topography.

References: Kendrick and Hawkes 1937; Meaney 1964, 99; Geake 1997, 154–5; Cherryson 2005b, 60–1

Preston Candover, SU604403

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: long barrow

Human remains and weapons were discovered on the site of a long barrow in the C19th. A spearhead discovered not long prior to 1893 was noted as being early medieval in date. By the end of the C19th the barrow had almost been ploughed out, but a seax was found near its edge in 1939. Overall, ‘the evidence suggests that the barrow once contained secondary inhumations of Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon

date' (Cherryson 2005b, 61). However, as Semple (2013, 82) has pointed out, the finds could be non-funerary or votive in nature.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 61; Geake 1997, 155; Meaney 1964, 99; RCHME 1979; Shore 1893; Semple 2013, 82

Romsey Abbey, SU351212

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Indirectly associated: settlement/enclosure

Excavations in 1973–91 revealed 31 early medieval burials, all with the heads to the W (Scott 1996). No grave-goods or coffins were found. Four of the burials lay on charcoal beds and 1 of the graves was partially stone-lined. Two of the charcoal beds were radiocarbon dated, providing a 'Middle–Late Saxon' date (680–1000 and 790–1170 at 95.4% probability). Fourteen further inhumations were uncovered in 2004 (Cherryson 2005b, 62). A minster, potentially founded in the C8th, may predate the nunnery, founded in the late C9th–early C10th (Collier 1991). It is possible that the burials relate to this earlier church, and could therefore date to the period of study. A Late Iron Age and Roman settlement with C1st–2nd timber buildings and a large C2nd ditch were discovered in Narrow Lane, 100m to S. Occupation appears to end c. AD 370 (Scott 1993).

References: Collier 1991; Scott 1996; Cherryson 2005b, 62–3

Shavard's Farm, SU618208

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: linear ditch. Indirectly associated: Roman villa

Human remains were first noted during excavations for a sewage pipe in 1972 (Devenish and Champion 1977). Grave-goods including a shield boss, knife, buckle and a spearhead were also recorded. Eight additional burials were recorded between 1984–88. Not all were excavated but 1 contained weapons and was dated to the C7th. Excavations in 1998–99 located another 9 graves, 2 of which contained grave-goods (knives and a buckle). One grave contained possible evidence of a coffin. The 2 graves to the W of the majority of the graves were thought to date from the C6th, while most of the others are C7th. Most of the inhumations were extended and orientated either W–E or N–S. A linear ditch is thought to have influenced the positioning of the burials. Eight of the graves contained flints. Several large flints had been placed in the fill above the upper bodies of 2 of the individuals. In 2 graves, layers of flint had been placed above the skull. In another case, the knee was raised and supported by chalk blocks and a flint placed above the kneecap. This is a rare practice nationally, but occurs at other locations in Hampshire: Droxford, Worthy Park, Winnall II and Portway East. There was also a flint cairn, which may be earlier or contemporary, in the centre of the cemetery. Flint clearly seems to have played an important role in the burial practices of the community.

References: Webster and Cherry 1974, 196–7; Devenish and Champion 1978, 37–42; Stoodley and Stedman 2001; Cherryson 2005b, 63–4

Six Dials (Southampton SOU 31 and 258), SU424122

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Middle Anglo-Saxon inhumations were excavated at Six Dials in 1981 (SOU 31) and 1986 (SOU 258). The burials appeared to overlay slag and charcoal deposited in c. AD 750–850, and were thus thought to be part of a cemetery founded in the late C9th/C10th. However, the radiocarbon dating of 1 burial to 550–690 (at 95.4% confidence) suggests otherwise, in contradiction with the stratigraphic evidence.

References: Andrews 1997; Cherryson 2005b, 68–9

Snell's Corner, SU707153

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: round barrow; prehistoric/Roman cemetery

A cemetery was discovered in 1947 during road improvement works. Excavations by the Ministry of Works uncovered 33 inhumations, together with Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman burials. Most of the early medieval burials were orientated SSW–NNE with heads to SSW. Grave-goods were associated with 27 of the burials, and included buckles, shields, knives, rings and beads. The cemetery has been linked with the South Saxons, as the two pottery vessels belong to a type only found in Sussex (Meaney 1964, 100). Meaney also describes the cemetery as ‘poor’. The feet of the individuals were pointing towards a probable disc barrow (NMR SU 71 NW 17), in which an unaccompanied female inhumation was found during the 1947 excavations. The barrow was thought to be Bronze Age but was possibly Iron Age. The cemetery may have come (back) into use in the Romano-British period and was subsequently used for early medieval burial (Yorke 1995, 46).

References: Knocker 1955; Geake 1997, 155; Cherryson 2005b, 65

Southampton SOU 13, SU429117

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

A cemetery of 81 Middle Anglo-Saxon inhumations was found during an excavation at Marine Parade in 1973 (SOU 13). A building thought to be a church was also found on the site. Radiocarbon dating was carried out on 4 of the skeletons in 2003: 3 of the skeletons were of Middle Anglo-Saxon date and 1 was Early Anglo-Saxon.

References: Morton 1992a; Cherryson 2005a, 279; 2005b, 69–70; 2010, 60

Southampton SOU 1484, SU426117

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council excavated land to the NE of St Mary's church, revealing Middle Anglo-Saxon rubbish pits, at least 2 posthole buildings, and evidence for the working of iron, antler and whalebone. A single human skeleton was radiocarbon dated to AD 645–685.

References: Garner and Elliott 2009

Southampton SOU 1553, SU425118

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

An evaluation by the Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council revealed a small Middle Anglo-Saxon cemetery centred on a ring-ditch surrounding the grave of an adult female. Around the ring-ditch were 7 graves, 1 containing 2 skeletons with their legs 'intertwined'. Further graves had probably been destroyed by later activity. The 8 individuals included a juvenile, a sub-adult, 6 adult females and 1 adult male. Two of the female burials were prone, and another was pregnant. One of the 2 women in the double grave had had a copper-alloy chain placed, wrapped in textile, on her right collar bone. The central skeleton and 1 in the double grave were dated; both fell in the period AD 660–680 at 68% probability. The cemetery was succeeded by Middle Anglo-Saxon occupation represented by a number of pits (SHER MSH4883).

References: Garner 2012

Southampton SOU 207, SU434132

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: other Roman building

Human remains were found during a watching brief in Bitterne Road, near the corner of Hawkeswood Road, in 1984 (SOU 207). Parts of 9 skeletons were found, aligned W–E. The other finds from the trench included iron nails, possibly indicating the presence of coffins. Radiocarbon dating of 1 of the burials indicates a late C7th or C8th date (HER).

References: Cherryson 2005b, 72–3

Southampton SOU 414, SU433132

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: other Roman building

Six human burials were found during excavations on the south corner of Hawkeswood Road and Bitterne Road in 1989 and 1990. One burial was accompanied by a spearhead, which was initially thought to date from the C5th/6th, but re-examination a few years later identified it as a type used predominantly in the C7th. A radiocarbon date obtained from another burial gave a late C7th–8th date.

References: Hughes 1991, 37; Smith 1991; Cherryson 2005a, 265; 2005b, 73

Southampton SOU 630, SU426115

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Two burials were excavated to the S of St Mary's churchyard. The excavations were carried out following the discovery of human bone during the installation of parking meters along Chapel Road. One of the inhumations was radiocarbon dated to AD 676–895, the other to 769–883.

References: Smith 1995; Cherryson 2005b, 74–5

Southampton SOU 862, SU435133

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: other Roman building

A small cemetery of 15 mostly E–W inhumations was found during a watching brief on groundworks for a new building at 75, Bitterne Road, in 1998. Radiocarbon dating of 3 of the inhumations suggested a probable late C7th date for the cemetery. There were no grave-goods. All age groups were represented except juveniles and children.

References: Southern Archaeological Services 1998; Cherryson 2005b, 74; 2010, 60

South Gate, Winchester, SU479291

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: other Roman building; Roman road

Two burials were recorded during excavations on the site of St Thomas Parish Hall following its demolition in 1971. The burials were found in a ditch outside the Roman city walls. One of the burials was supine and extended; the other, which had early signs of leprosy, was on its side with the legs flexed. One of the burials was radiocarbon dated, suggesting a date of c. AD 700 for both burials.

References: Kjølbbye-Biddle 1992, 221; Geake 1997, 156; Cherryson 2005b, 86–7

St Giles' Hill, Winchester, SU490292

Pays: Hampshire Downs

A cemetery of at least 11 inhumations was recorded within the area of St Giles Hill. Evidence for the cemetery has been in the form of isolated burials and from a range of objects, thought to be grave-goods, recovered from the area. These objects include a sword pommel, an iron buckle, a key, a knife, a spearhead, an amber bead, glass beads and shield bosses. The burials include a grave containing a 'cup and patten' found before 1845, a burial accompanied by a dagger and knife found in 1888, and 6 burials found while installing children's swings within the grounds of Highland House in 1905. These inhumations were found with grave-goods including spearheads, an iron ferrule and a silver ring. An unaccompanied burial was also found during construction work on a house at Netherwood in 2000 (NMR SU 42 NE 52). Further unaccompanied burials were found during an evaluation and watching brief by TVAS in 2009–10 (Stoodley 2011).

References: Meaney 1964, 101–2; Cherryson 2005b, 87; Stoodley 2011, 36

St Mary Bourne, SU422497

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: Roman burials; possible Roman building; Roman road; field system

In 1875, an inhumation burial was found at Derrydown Copse during road construction. The burial lay on the brow of the hill and was cut 1m into the chalk. A probable early medieval iron buckle lay close to the skull. The site has views to the

SE, facing away from the Roman road and slightly away from the village centre. The crossing of the Roman road over the Bourne may have been an important spot. Roman pottery and coins, the possible remains of Roman buildings and inhumations in oak coffins were also uncovered in the C19th at the bottom of the hill adjacent to the river (NMR SU 44 NW 3).

References: Stevens 1895, 71; Cherryson 2005b, 79

St Mary's Stadium I, SU428119

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

The larger of the 2 St Mary's Stadium sites, comprising a mixed-rite cemetery of 18 cremations and 26 inhumations. The inhumations were interred within 24 single graves and one double grave. Four were orientated N-S; all the others were orientated W-E. Wood stains representing either wooden linings, planks or coffins were noted in four graves. Two graves had possible settings for above ground markers. The majority of the burials were accompanied by grave-goods, which dated the burials to the late C7th-early C8th.

References: Holdsworth 1980; Morton 1992a, 48; Birbeck 2005; Cherryson 2005b, 75-6; 2010, 57; Stoodley 2010

St Mary's Stadium II, SU429120

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

A group of 10 inhumations was found 100m to the N of the mixed-rite cemetery. All were supine with extended or slightly flexed legs and orientated with the heads to the W. None of the burials were furnished, and there was no evidence of grave structures or above-ground markers. Although it is possible that these burials were part of the mixed rite cemetery, their separation from the earlier cemetery and the differences in funerary provision, combined with a radiocarbon date of 650-950 AD from one of the inhumations, indicate a possible later C8th date for the cemetery.

References: Birbeck 2005; Cherryson 2005b, 76; Stoodley 2010

St Pancras, Winchester, SU483295

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: other Roman building

The site of St Pancras Church was investigated as part of excavations of the Lower Brook Street area between 1962 and 1970, in advance of the redevelopment work. The church was found in 1968, with the excavation of the pre-Conquest levels (period I and II) taking place in 1970 (Cherryson 2005b, 88). Two or 3 W-E burials pre-date period II. One burial which lay below the NW of the earliest church was radiocarbon dated to 710±70AD and it has been suggested that this burial, which clearly pre-dates the church, may have formed part of the late C7th-8th Lower Brook Street cemetery, which lies less than 50m away (Cherryson 2005b, 88). Alternatively, this burial and the two other may have formed part of a separate cemetery and, given that one of the other burials has been dated to 860±60 AD, this cemetery may have continued in use until the C9th (Cherryson 2005b, 88). Finally,

it is possible that the later of the radiocarbon dated burials and the undated burial may in some way be related to the church and it has been suggested that they may contain the remains of individuals closely linked to the church, perhaps involved in its foundation (Cherryson 2005b, 88).

References: Biddle 1975, 318–21; Keene 1985, 743; Cherryson 2005b, 88

Staple Gardens, Winchester, SU479295

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: other Roman buildings

A total of 288 burials were excavated between 1984 and 1989. The majority, if not all, of the burials may postdate the period of study – 9 were radiocarbon dated, of which 7 fell between AD 770 and 990, and therefore probably date from the second half of the C9th onwards. The majority of the burials were unfurnished and evidence of coffins or wooden linings was found in a number of the graves.

References: Kipling and Scobie 1990; Geake 1997, 156; Cherryson 2005b, 89–90

Storey's Meadow, SU642242

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: round barrow

The site was excavated by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in 2011, in advance of housing construction. Forty-nine burials were found cut into the ground surrounding the ring ditch and into the fill of the ditch. The individuals were adults, adolescents and children, and were buried in a variety of crouched and extended positions. Some of the graves were oriented E–W but the rest were N–S. Several burials contained grave-goods including weaponry, jewellery and tools. A high proportion of the individuals were non-adults, and there were numerous serious pathologies and 3 cases of trepanation. Lippen Wood Roman villa is located 800m to the W.

References: Ford and Falys 2016

Sutton Scotney, SU462391

Pays: Hampshire Downs

A skeleton, orientated with the head to the W and accompanied by a spearhead, was found at the edge of Chalk Dell in Sutton Scotney. The site is located on the NE-facing slope of a hill, facing and visible from the village of Sutton Scotney.

References: Meaney 1964, 101; Cherryson 2005b, 80

Testcombe Gravel Pit, SU386390

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: Iron Age/Roman settlement; field system

An early medieval shield boss and spear, indicating a possible inhumation, were found in 1931. There were also the lynchets and banks of a 'Celtic' field system, and a number of depressions in which rabbit scrapes revealed Iron Age and

Appendix

Romano-British pottery, bones of domestic animals, oyster shells and pieces of daub with the marks of wattle upon them (NMR SU 33 NE 11).

References: Meaney 1964, 97

The Shallows, Breamore, SU161173

Pays: Avon and Stour Valleys

Directly associated: round barrow

Metal detecting in the 1990s revealed a C6th bronze Byzantine bucket, a spear-head and an iron shield boss. Geophysical survey was subsequently carried out. Berkshire Archaeological services dug 7 test pits into a low mound on the site in 1998. Four burials were found in 2 of the test pits grouped towards the middle of the mound. Two of the burials were supine extended with the heads to the S, while the orientation and body position of the other burials was unclear. Another evaluation by Time Team in 2001 revealed 13 inhumations, including a double burial. Grave-goods including 6 stave-built buckets, shield bosses, spearheads and a glass bowl were also found. The mound is likely to be of Bronze Age construction, given the presence of collared urn sherds.

References: Edwards 2001; Cherryson 2005b, 48; Hinton and Worrell 2017

Tichborne, SU586318

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: Iron Age/Roman settlement

An extended inhumation with head to the W, accompanied by a double-sided bone comb and fragments of the skull of a separate burial, was found during the levelling of the ground surface for a cricket pitch in March 1948 in the grounds of the Public Assistance Institution, Tichborne Down House. Under it was an Iron Age rubbish pit containing a sawn-off antler tip, Iron Age and Romano-British sherds and an Iron Age bone weaving comb (NMR SU 53 SE 24).

References: Cottrill 1952, 360; Meaney 1964, 94; Cherryson 2005b, 56

Towncil Field, Hayling Island, SU726031

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

Directly associated: Iron Age/Roman temple/shrine

Fourteen sherds of Early Anglo-Saxon cinerary urn and 6 Late Anglo-Saxon sherds, including 3 rims, were found in 1965 by Richard Bradley, after the field was ploughed. One decorated urn was dateable to the C7th. The finds were 150m away from the site of an Iron Age temple/shrine dating from c. 50 BC, replaced by a Romano-British temple in c. AD 55–60, which continued in use to the early C3rd. The building may have been extant until the C8th/9th, when parts of it were reused. A Middle Anglo-Saxon settlement was discovered overlaying the Iron Age/Romano-British temple complex. It appears that substantial parts of the temple were standing, and reused during the C8th–9th. Early medieval cess pits, ditches and postholes were located in the north-west sector of the Romano-British temple temeros courtyard.

References: Downey *et al.* 1979; King and Soffe 1998, 35–48; Cherryson 2005b, 52–3; NMR SU 70 SW 37

Twyford School, SU483250

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: settlement/enclosure

Excavations carried out in 2007 by Wessex Archaeology revealed 18 inhumation graves. A small penannular ditch, possibly a prehistoric roundhouse, lay 25m E of the burials. The grave-goods suggested a late C5th/6th–8th date. A further unaccompanied burial of possible early medieval date was found during an evaluation by Wessex Archaeology in 2010.

References: De'Athe 2010; Dinwiddy 2011

Upper Bugle Street III (Southampton SOU 124), SU419113

Pays: South Hampshire Lowland and Coast

A human skeleton was found in a large early medieval ditch during an excavation on the N side of Simnel Street in 1976/1977 (SOU 124). The skeleton had apparently been thrown in while the ditch was being infilled. It has been dated to the late C8th–9th or C10th.

References: Shaw 1986; Cherryson 2005b, 77

War Down, SU726198

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: round barrow

A group of barrows on War Down. In 1932, human remains were found when a fire-watching tower was constructed on top of one of the barrows, situated at the highest point of War Down. In 1963, a spearhead was found in a trench in the same barrow. A C6th pottery sherd was also found in 1973 18m S of the barrow.

References: Cunliffe 1975; Cherryson 2005b, 81

West Ham, SU624518

Pays: Hampshire Downs

A grave was discovered during the construction of the Alton Light Railway in 1899. It contained an extended skeleton, accompanied by 2 spearheads, a seax, a bronze hanging bowl, an iron skillet and a set of bone draughtsmen/gaming pieces. Geake (1997, 87) has suggested that hanging bowls were deposited in graves predominantly during the C7th and 8th.

References: Anon. 1908, 79–80; Meaney 1964, 98; Geake 1997, 87, 156; Cherryson 2005b, 81

Weston Colley, SU504395

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Evidence of a cemetery was first discovered during railway construction in the C19th. Excavations by the University of Winchester/Nick Stoodley in 2003–6 revealed 12 inhumations and 4 cremations dating from the C5th–7th. A female inhumation burial with C7th grave-goods lay at the centre of a ring-ditch, and the 4 cremations and another inhumation were within or adjacent to the ditch. Cremations 1–3 may date from the C7th.

References: Fern and Stoodley 2003; 2004a; 2004b; Meaney 1964, 98; Cherryson 2005b, 81

Weyhill Road, Andover (ALDI site), SU341458

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Directly associated: Roman road; linear ditch

‘Execution cemetery’. Excavated by Cotswold Archaeology in 2016. One burial could be mid-C9th.

References: Cotswold Archaeology 2017

Winnall I, SU491301

Pays: Hampshire Downs

This was the first early medieval cemetery to be discovered at Winnall, and was partially destroyed by railway construction in the C19th. Railway workers made the discovery of a number of graves. They were said to be shallow and without covering mounds. Three shield bosses survive.

References: Meaney 1964, 102; Meaney and Hawkes 1970, 4; Geake 1997; Cherryson 2005b, 90

Winnall II, SU494301

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Forty-nine C7th to early C8th graves in a possible successor cemetery to Winnall I were excavated in the 1950s. Nearly all were orientated with the head to the W. Many were accompanied by iron knives, some with a few additional items, and c. 13 were unaccompanied.

References: Meaney 1964, 102; Meaney and Hawkes 1970; Geake 1997; Cherryson 2005b, 90–1

Worthy Park, SU500329

Pays: Hampshire Downs

Indirectly associated: Roman road

Ninety-four inhumations and 46 cremations were uncovered in 1961–2, perhaps only half of the total number of graves. Most were W–E, but many were N–S or S–N. Two females were buried prone. Grave-goods suggested the cemetery was in

use in the C5th–7th, and a (possibly C7th) group was unaccompanied or had only a knife. There were numerous items of Roman manufacture.

References: Meaney 1964, 102–3; Hawkes and Wells 1975; Geake 1997, 157; Hawkes and Grainger 2003; Cherryson 2005b, 91

Dorset

Bradford Peverell, SY661927

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: Roman road Indirectly associated: Roman aqueduct

Eight inhumations were found during the construction of a patio in Frome View in 1977. Excavations over the following two years and throughout the 1980s revealed a further 10 burials. Of these, 11 had grave-goods: knives, buckles, pendants, bone combs and spearheads. C7th–8th date suggested. Slots possibly relating to above-ground markers were found in two of the graves.

References: Keen and Hawthorne 1979; Hawthorne and Pinder 1989; Cherryson 2005b, 20

Chettle House, ST950128

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: long barrow

Secondary inhumation burials were discovered when the Neolithic long barrow to the SE of Chettle House was excavated at the beginning of the C18th. Spearheads and other weapons were found with the human remains and suggest an Early to Middle Anglo-Saxon date. A further secondary burial was found in 1776: ‘the sheep having made a scrape on the side of this barrow, near the summit, and the earth having moulded away, a human skeleton was discovered: it lay on its back, was four feet long, and was quite perfect, though remarkably small, and quite even – judged to have been a female. It was not more than one foot beneath the sod’ (NMR ST 81 SE 52). References: Warne 1866, 2; Banks 1900, 143–9; Grinsell 1959, 77; Cherryson 2005b, 22

Culliford Tree Barrow, SY699854

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: bowl barrow

In 1858, 4 extended burials were discovered at a shallow depth below the top of a Bronze Age bowl barrow. One burial was accompanied by amber beads, some of which were ‘gold-plated’, possibly from a necklace. An early medieval date has been suggested for these burials (Cherryson 2005b, 23), although Piggott (1938) included the barrow in his list of Early Bronze Age ‘Wessex graves’. It is of interest that the barrow ‘came to mark the hundred meeting place and, indeed, gave its name to the hundred’ (NMR SY 68 NE 180). The barrow is also close to the end of a bank barrow.

References: Warne 1866, 18–19; Grinsell 1959, 143; Cherryson 2005b, 23

Eggardon Hill, SY547942

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: round barrow; Roman road; field systems

Indirectly associated: hillfort

Excavations in 1982 of a Bronze Age barrow to the SE of Eggardon hillfort uncovered 3 W–E unfurnished extended burials. In 1983, a primary Bronze Age cremation was found. The barrow is cut by the Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter. The barrow ditch had also been cut by an army training trench, dated by a find from 1939. Radiocarbon dating of the inhumation burials later produced a C7th–10th (probable C8th) date (Cherryson 2005b, 24–5).

References: Putnam 1982; 1983; 2002; Cherryson 2005b, 24–5

Hambledon Hill, ST856115

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: causewayed enclosure; hillfort; field systems

In 1978, during archaeological assessment and excavation of the Stepleton causewayed enclosure on Hambledon Hill, a small cemetery of 13 individuals, including a double grave, was uncovered. The burials were supine extended and orientated W–E. Only 2 of the burials were accompanied by grave-goods, both knives. The burials were inserted into a small ditched enclosure, covering 2 acres, at the SE extremity of the Hambledon Hill Neolithic complex. The layout, location and paucity of grave-goods suggest a C7th or 8th date (Cherryson 2005b, 26).

References: Mercer 1980; Cherryson 2005b, 26; Mercer and Healy 2008

Hardown Hill, SY405944

Pays: Marshwood Vale, Axe Valley and Hills

Directly associated: ?disc barrow; bowl barrows

In 1916, a spearhead was found in one of a group of barrows near the summit of Hardown Hill, and a further 8 spearheads, as well as an axe, a shield boss, a long small brooch and a perforated pebble were recovered shortly after. No skeletal material was found, although the acidic soils are not conducive to good preservation. The possibility that the items represent a votive offering cannot be excluded, however (Cherryson 2005b, 26).

References: Wingrave 1932; Meaney 1964, 81; Evison 1968; Cherryson 2005b, 26

High Lea Farm, SU002063

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: round barrows

A post-Roman/early medieval cemetery, containing at least 70 graves, was discovered during Bournemouth University excavations in 2006. The graves were revealed in plan and only 2 were excavated; radiocarbon dating of one produced a date of AD 723–740 (95% probability). The graves overlay a Middle Bronze Age ring-ditch and were adjacent to a larger Early Bronze Age barrow.

References: Gale *et al.* 2008

Long Crichel, ST960115

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: bell barrow. Indirectly associated: linear earthwork; round barrows

The excavation of a round barrow in 1959–60 by Christopher Sparey Green for the Ministry of Works revealed 3 extended inhumations at a superficial depth. One grave contained a small bronze buckle, an iron knife, a small iron buckle plate, part of a knife sheath and an iron awl.

References: Grinsell 1959, 118; Green *et al.* 1982, 39–58; Cherryson 2005b, 28

Maiden Castle, SY669885

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: bank barrow; hillfort; Roman temple; Roman burials

Two intrusive inhumations were found just below the surface at the E end of the bank barrow in the centre of Maiden Castle hillfort. Bank barrows are very rare (fewer than 10 in Britain), and this is the largest example, at 546m. One of the burials was supine with the head to the W and was accompanied by grave-goods including a seax and a knife, indicating a C7th or 8th date. The second burial had been mutilated and dismembered, and was unaccompanied. Radiocarbon dating produced a C7th–9th date for this burial, although it had initially been thought to date from the Neolithic. It was re-examined by Don Brothwell, who found that the injuries were likely to have been made by metal weapons, and that the hole in the skull, like many of the other injuries, was probably the result of combat blows rather than trepanation.

References: Wheeler 1943; Grinsell 1959, 82; Meaney 1964, 81; Brothwell 1971; Sharples 1991; Cherryson 2005b, 30; Reynolds 2009, 210

Manor Farm, Portesham, SY602859

Pays: West Dorset Coast and Isle of Portland

Directly associated: prehistoric/Roman settlement; prehistoric-Roman cemetery

Excavations prior to construction work at Manor Farm uncovered a small cemetery. Eight supine extended skeletons, orientated approximately W–E, were excavated, while a ninth, an infant, was left *in situ*. Four of the burials lay in single graves while the other 4 lay in a pit. The majority of burials were unfurnished, but one grave contained a saw. Radiocarbon dating suggests a C7th or 8th date – the dates for 2 burials, at 95.4% probability, were 650–780AD and 660–890AD.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 35; Valentin 2000; 2003

Martin 28, SU057181

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: bowl barrow; linear earthwork

A Bronze Age ditched bowl barrow adjacent to Grim's Ditch was excavated c. 1842 by W. Chaffers, who found an early medieval interment with 2 iron weapons. This

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burial site is located in the historic county of Wiltshire, but is considered as part of Dorset in this study owing to its proximity and similarity with other sites in Cranborne Chase, such as Pentridge 34.

References: NMR SU 01 NE 9

Mount Pleasant, SY709899

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: henge; prehistoric settlement

Two probable C7th burials, 1 with an iron knife, were found during excavations at Mount Pleasant henge enclosure, E of Dorchester, in the 1970s. One was near the W entrance of the enclosure, the other within a ditch in a central location. Both were extended inhumations.

References: Wainwright 1979; Cherryson 2005b, 31–2

New Barn, Abbotsbury, SY592834

Pays: West Dorset Coast and Isle of Portland

Directly associated: bowl barrow

Excavation in c. 1876 of a probable Bronze Age barrow revealed several inhumations, mostly in stone cists. Some or all of these are likely to be secondary burials of early medieval date – associated finds included iron spearheads, a knife, dress pins, a ring and a ‘ladies’ case’.

References: Penny 1877, 50–1; Grinsell 1959, 85; Cherryson 2005b, 18

Oakley Down, SU020175

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: bowl barrow. Indirectly associated: Roman road; prehistoric/Roman enclosure; field systems; round barrows

A female secondary burial, extended and orientated NE–SW, was uncovered during the excavation of a Bronze Age bowl barrow on close to the Ackling Dyke Roman road on Oakley Down prior to 1812. The burial was accompanied by glass and amber beads, a button brooch, two rings and iron fragments, suggesting a C6th date.

References: Hoare 1812, 236–7; Grinsell 1959, 143; Cherryson 2005b, 32

Pentridge 34, SU053181

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: bowl barrow; linear earthwork

A bowl barrow 50m S of Bokerley Dyke and on the W side of Grim’s Ditch, excavated by Hoare and Cunnington in the early C19th. The barrow contained ‘two skeletons, and several instruments of iron, viz. a lance-head, two knives, and an article of bone’ (Hoare 1812, 234).

References: Hoare 1812, 234; Grinsell 1959, 123; Meaney 1964, 81; Bowen 1990, 35–7; Cherryson 2005b, 33

Poundbury, SY684910

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: Roman cemetery. Indirectly associated: Roman aqueduct; temple; hillfort; prehistoric enclosures

At least 3, and probably more, post-Roman burials. Two of these burials, 1 of which was tightly crouched, lay above C6th and 7th features.

References: Farrar 1952, 98–9; Green 1987; 2004; Farwell and Molleson 1993; Cherryson 2005b, 35

Shapwick, ST950025

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: Roman road. Indirectly associated: Roman buildings; linear earthworks

During the lowering of a probable barrow between Badbury Rings and Shapwick in the early C19th, a crouched skeleton and a bone comb were found. Grinsell (1984, 50) has suggested an early medieval date.

References: Woolls 1839, 105; Grinsell 1984, 50

Tinney's Lane, ST644168

Pays: Blackmore Vale

Directly associated: prehistoric/Roman burials

Four burials were uncovered in Sherborne in advance of residential development in 1997. Two were radiocarbon dated, one producing an early medieval date (c. AD 430–660, so possibly mid-C6th). The other was dated to the Iron Age. The 'Saxon' burial was crouched on its right side, orientated N–S, with no grave-goods. The individual was female, c. 30–35 years.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 39; McKinley 1999a

Tolpuddle Ball, SY814948

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: Roman cemetery; prehistoric-Roman settlement

A 4-phase Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Tolpuddle was discovered during survey of the proposed Tolpuddle bypass route in 1993. Five burials were radiocarbon dated, producing dates between c. AD 400 and c.700. Bronze Age enclosures were also present.

References: Hearne and Birbeck 1999; Cherryson 2005b, 42–3

Trumpet Major, SY702900

Pays: Central Chalk Downlands

Directly associated: Roman cemetery; prehistoric-Roman settlement

In the 1890s the construction of a house (later the Trumpet Major pub) revealed prehistoric settlement features, earthworks and burials. The burials were originally

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thought to be Roman, but a reassessment of the finds revealed them to be post-Roman (Green 1984).

References: Banks 1893; Green 1984; Cherryson 2005b, 43

Ullwell, SZ022809

Pays: Isle of Purbeck

Three unfurnished cist graves were discovered during building work at Shepherd's Farm in 1949. In 1982, further graves were discovered during quarrying prior to the extension of buildings at the farm. Subsequent excavations uncovered 55 W-E graves. Radiocarbon dating suggested the cemetery was in use through the C7th.

References: Cox 1988; Cherryson 2005b, 43

Woodyates Inn, SU039195

Pays: Cranborne Chase

Directly associated: long barrow. Indirectly associated: linear earthwork; field systems

Excavation of a long barrow (RCHME Pentridge 23) on the W side of Bokerley Dyke before 1810 by Hoare revealed an extended female skeleton, accompanied by a bionical gold bead, 2 glass beads, 1 on a gold wire, a jet bead, a millefiori plaque on a gold chain, an ivory ring from a bag or pouch, 3 iron clench bolts, a hook and a buckle. A C7th date has been suggested. The clench bolts may be from a coffin or bed burial (Speake 1989).

References: Meaney 1964, 82; Bowen 1990; Barrett *et al.* 1991, 25–58; Cherryson 2005b, 32–3

Worth Matravers, SY975778

Pays: Isle of Purbeck

Directly associated: Roman cemetery; Roman building; prehistoric settlement. Indirectly associated: field systems

Twenty-six post-Roman graves, including several multiple burials, were excavated in 2011 by East Dorset Antiquarian Society in advance of development. The same excavations and previous excavations have revealed extensive prehistoric and Roman settlement evidence, as well as Romano-British Kimmeridge shale-working. A Roman infant cemetery of 17–18 graves was also found on the site.

References: Ladle 2012

Somerset

Avon Farm, ST686686

Pays: North Somerset

At least 6 inhumation burials were found in about 1936 in a gravel pit close to Avon Farm, Saltford, by John Thrift of Bath. They lay approx E-W and one

contained an iron knife of early medieval date, similar to some of those from Camerton.

References: Crook 1938; Meaney 1964, 219; Geake 1997, 144; Cherryson 2005b, 115

Beckery Chapel, ST483383

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

Excavations in the 1880s by a local antiquary, John Morland, uncovered the remains of 2 chapels and 6 burials. In 1967–8 the site was reopened by Philip Rahtz for the Chalice Well Trust to reinvestigate the chapels and extent of the associated cemetery. New investigations were undertaken in 2016 by South West Heritage Trust as a community training excavation, funded by the HLF Avalon Marshes Landscape Partnership. Around 63 approximately W–E burials have been uncovered, 6 of which were prone and the remainder supine, where burial position was discernible. Nearly all were male, apart from 1 female and 2 children, whose sex could not be determined. There was no evidence of wooden coffins or timber linings. A single burial, the only stone-lined one, lay within the timber chapel. Radiocarbon dating of one of the burials suggested a Middle Anglo-Saxon date. The bodies of 6 Middle to Late Anglo-Saxons (Burials 1, 5, 20, 21, 27 and 28) found in the monastic cemetery have been interpreted as individuals who had committed mortal sins or who were experiencing some form of penance (Reynolds 2009).

References: Wilson and Hurst 1969, 239; Rahtz and Hirst 1974; Rahtz 1993; Cherryson 2005b, 118; Reynolds 2009; Brunning 2016

Bradley Hill, ST479303

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

Directly associated: Roman agricultural buildings; prehistoric settlement

A cemetery established adjacent to a farmstead in the late Roman or early post-Roman period. The site was excavated by Roger Leech in the 1970s. South of the buildings 21 individuals were buried in rows of E–W graves, some slab-lined. Recent radiocarbon dates for 2 of the burials fall within the C5th or 6th.

References: Gerrard 2004; 2010

Brean Down, ST293588

Pays: Mendips

Directly associated: prehistoric settlement. Indirectly associated: hillfort; bowl barrow; Roman temple

Human remains were first recorded in the cliff in 1902; further finds were made 1930–59, including 10 burials during the 1950s. Full-scale excavations undertaken in 1985–7 revealed 8 W–E unfurnished burials, some of which had partial stone linings, stratified above Iron Age levels and excluding Roman finds. A radiocarbon date of AD 650±80 (Birm-246) was obtained from the site. In the 1985 excavations, 2 post-Roman burials were removed which overlay a Late Bronze Age occupation layer. To the N of the area investigated in 1985, 3 burials exposed in the cliff face were later excavated. One was covered by a massive limestone boulder and the

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grave edge was revetted on one side only. The second grave had a lining of limestone blocks around the head. The third grave contained the skeleton of an infant with 3 limestone blocks forming the feet. Nearby at a slightly lower level was the skeleton of an older infant. In total the cemetery comprised at least 22 burials.

References: Bell 1990; Cherryson 2005b, 118–19

Buckland Dinham, ST748502

Pays: Frome Valley

Directly associated: long barrow; possible round barrow

Five or 6 graves were found in 1925 in a small quarry and reported to the local archaeologist E. Horne. One burial was excavated by Horne and A. Bulleid. It contained a female skeleton with the head to the NW. The burial was accompanied by 2 rings of fine silver wire and 6 beads of amethyst, glass and white shell (possibly cowrie shell). The presence of amethyst suggests a C7th date. There are 2 barrows close to the burial ground. To the NW there is a chambered long barrow, and to the SW is a smaller barrow.

References: Horne 1926; Meaney 1964, 218; Geake 1997, 176; Cherryson 2005b, 115

Burnett, ST666652

Pays: North Somerset

A C6th or C7th Saxon gold pendant with filigree decoration, together with some beads which crumbled on exposure and a few fragments of bone, was found in 1922 in recently moved topsoil at the side of the road, c. 100m south of the Burnett crossroads.

References: Leighton 1937; Geake 1997, 144; Cherryson 2005b, 123

Burnett Hill, ST665665

Pays: North Somerset

A stone coffin cut from a solid block of oolite was found in 1922 during widening of the road from Burnett to Keynsham. It contained the skeleton of a woman, with iron nails (possibly from hobnail boots) at the feet, thought to date from the C5th. The head of the coffin was rounded and the covering slab was in 2 pieces. Several coffins of the same type have been found in the district, notably at Keynsham and Corston. There was no mention of grave-goods or associated finds apart from the nails.

References: Leighton 1937, 244; NMR ST 66 NE 19

Camerton, ST686565

Pays: Cotswolds

In 1926, human bones were uncovered during quarrying at Camerton. As any remaining burials were under threat from the ongoing quarrying, the site was fully excavated in 1926–32. A total of 107 graves, including 2 double graves, containing 116 inhumations, some accompanied by grave-goods, were excavated. The majority of graves were orientated W–E. Where body position was known, the majority of burials were supine extended, although 2 lay on their side and 3 were prone. Three

graves contained complete or partial linings, while 5 graves had stones placed over the grave. The grave-goods suggest a C7th date for the cemetery, although there is a possibility that some of the unfurnished burials may be sub-Roman (Cherryson 2005b).

References: Horne 1928; 1933; Meaney 1964, 218–19; Cherryson 2005b, 119

Cannington, ST251403

Pays: Vale of Taunton

Directly associated: prehistoric-Roman burials; prehistoric settlement. Indirectly associated: hillfort

Human remains have been recovered from Old Cannington Quarry since the C19th. By the mid C20th at least 1000 burials had probably been destroyed by quarrying. Quarrying at the site ceased in 1939 although excavations continued, with 2 skeletons being recovered in 1946 and a skull in 1957. In 1961, work resumed in the quarry and more skeletons were uncovered, with 20 skeletons being excavated by the sons of the quarry foreman. During 1962–3 large-scale excavations were undertaken on an area under threat. A further 17 burials were excavated by volunteers in 1964–6. In total, 542 burials were recovered during excavations in 1962–6. Most burials were supine extended and orientated approximately W–E. Stone linings, stone covers and/or grave-goods, mainly knives, pins, beads and Roman coins, were present in some burials. Radiocarbon dates and grave-goods suggest the cemetery was in use in the C4th–8th.

References: Meaney 1964: 218–19; Rahtz *et al.* 2000; Cherryson 2005b, 119–20

Daw's Castle, ST062433

Pays: Vale of Taunton

A number of E–W orientated graves were found during the C19th construction of lime kilns on the NE side of the site and are thought to be C5th in date.

References: Pearce 1978, 66, 184; Cherryson 2005b, 121

Evercreech, ST644388

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

A male skeleton, accompanied by an 'Anglo-Saxon' knife, a piece of bone and a sherd of a buff-coloured pot of 'fine paste', was found by a labourer in a quarry in January 1934.

References: Dobson 1935; Meaney 1964, 219; Cherryson 2005b, 123

Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet, ST631427

Pays: Mendips

Indirectly associated: Roman road; other Roman building

A group of inhumations was found during excavations at Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet, in 1997. Dating found the cemetery was predominantly Roman but continued in use into C9th. A Roman small town was located at Shepton.

References: Leach and Evans 2001; Cherryson 2005b, 130–2

Glastonbury Tor, ST511385

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

Site located on the relatively flat summit and the SW shoulder of Glastonbury Tor. The earliest settlement evidence dates to the post-Roman period and was discovered by P. Rahtz during his excavations in the 1960s. It was interpreted as the site of a post-Roman stronghold or settlement centred on the C6th but possibly dating back to the C5th. Two graves associated with these early remains were concluded to be 'pagan' burials, owing to their N-S orientation.

References: Rahtz 1970; Cherryson 2005b, 124–5

Henley Wood, ST442652

Pays: North Somerset

Indirectly associated: Roman burial; hillfort; Roman settlement

The site lies on a prominent spur adjacent to the hillfort of Cadbury Congresbury in an area mined for iron ore during the post-medieval period. Human remains are known to have been uncovered as a result of these activities. When the Henley quarry was extended in 1961–2 stone foundations and burials were uncovered, which led to large-scale excavations in 1964, 1968 and 1969. The majority of the burials were supine extended and orientated approximately W–E, although a few were N–S. There were no grave-goods, although nails were found in a number of graves, which may be indicative of coffins or other wooden structures within the graves. Many of the graves were partially or fully lined in stone, although in some cases this may represent stone displaced when the grave was cut into the bedrock. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the cemetery was in use during the C5th–7th (Cherryson 2005b).

References: Watts and Leach 1996; Cherryson 2005b, 125

Hicknoll Slait, ST639250

Pays: Blackmore Vale

In June 1966 4 inhumation burials were discovered by workmen excavating for a reservoir on the crest of Hicknoll Slait, Compton Pauncefoot. The site overlooks South Cadbury hillfort. The burials were in shallow rock-cut graves orientated roughly W–E. Associated finds included a spearhead and the damaged fragment of a late C7th shield boss. The evidence suggests that the burials are part of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery of late C7th. It lies close to the parish boundary with South Cadbury.

References: Taylor 1967; Geake 1997, 176–7; Cherryson 2005b, 126

Hinkley Point, ST197455

Pays: Vale of Taunton

Indirectly associated: enclosure/settlement; other Roman building; Roman burials
A cemetery of c. 150 graves was excavated in advance of construction. The burial ground comprised over 300 skeletons, including c. 200 that were articulated in

various degrees of completeness and a large number of disarticulated remains. Few artefacts were present and just 1 iron buckle of early medieval date was found as a grave-good, but a series of radiocarbon dates confirmed that the cemetery was in use in the C5th–7th AD. About 10m NW of the burial ground was an occupation area characterised by hearths, pits, postholes and a spread of charcoal. A curving ditch apparently separated this area from the burials and contained relatively large quantities of animal bone as well as iron fragments. Rare imports comprised 2 sherds of wine amphora and a sherd of glass bowl. The main concentration of graves occupied a small rectangular area which appears likely to have been enclosed, although no trace of a structure was evident. The graves here were almost all aligned E–W and densely intercutting, often incorporating charnel with the burial. E–W graves were also found outside the enclosure. Seven stratigraphic phases of burial were identified in the central area. Subsequent levelling deposits provided the floor for a small wooden structure of uncertain form shown by beam-slots and postholes. A later phase of burial, mostly outside the enclosure, was characterised by graves in NW–SE and NE–SW alignments.

References: Joyce *et al.* 2014; Reynish 2017

Huish Episcopi, ST430276

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

Indirectly associated: possible Roman villa

Three skeletons – 2 adults and a child – were found in February 1939 during the construction of a drive from the road from Langport to Somerton to a building site on the north side of the road, just to the west of Pick's or Pict's Hill. The remains were found close together, the most easterly of the skeletons surrounded by a stone slab enclosure. On a finger of the smaller adult (apparently a female) was a small bronze finger ring, probably of late Roman or Early Anglo-Saxon date (perhaps C6th–7th). The ring is in Taunton Museum. Close to parish boundary with High Ham.

References: Gray 1942; Leech 1976; Meaney 1964: 219; Cherryson 2005b, 126

Lamyatt Beacon, ST669361

Pays: Blackmore Vale

Directly associated: Roman temple

A cemetery of 16 graves lay to the north of a Roman temple. All were unaccompanied and orientated E–W with head to the W, in unlined graves.

References: Leech 1986; Cherryson 2005b, 126

Portbury Primary School, ST502753

Pays: North Somerset

Excavations were carried out by Avon Archaeological Unit in 2004 and 2005 on the site of an extension to St Mary's primary school not far from the medieval church, which is probably the site of the early medieval minster. Burials had previously been found during the construction of the school in 1972, but no report was made.

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A further 15 were found, including the remains of 'three young men, one with a cut wound made by a sharp implement', within a pit. These produced radiocarbon dates indicating that the cemetery was in use in the C6th–7th.

References: Aston 2011; Young 2005

Queen Camel, ST592255

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

In 1931, 9 skeletons, one of which was associated with an 'Anglo-Saxon' sword, were found in a quarry on a hill at Queen Camel. Further human remains were found when excavating for an underground electric cable at the end of WW2. Two skeletons were found, one at ST58972549. A watching brief at the end of the hill revealed nothing.

References: Meaney 1964, 219; Cherryson 2005b, 129

Station Road, ST468767

Pays: North Somerset

Indirectly associated: Roman settlement

Forty-three burials were discovered as a result of the construction of a garage in 1968. All were unaccompanied supine extended inhumations orientated E–W. Much residual C4th material was found in and around the graves, including stamped wares. A single stud and an earring were recovered, which are probably late Roman. The cemetery is considered likely to be early post-Roman in date.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 128–9; Pretty 1969, 51

Stoneage Barton, ST173312

Pays: Vale of Taunton

Indirectly associated: possible prehistoric/Roman enclosure

A cemetery of E–W inhumations, some within square-ditched enclosures, was located during excavations in 2000. Three certain and 2 probable graves (one that of a child) were recorded. A single grave was surrounded by a rectangular ditched enclosure with an entrance gap to the E. A pair of graves to the S of this was also probably enclosed, although the evidence was less clear, and part of a possible third rectangular enclosure lay beyond that. Radiocarbon dates on the only burial with any bone survival produced a combined calibrated date of cal AD 600–690. Parallels for this type of cemetery are known at Kenn in south Devon and in central Wales, where C6th–10th dates have been obtained.

References: Webster and Brunning 2004; Cherryson 2005b, 134

Templecombe, ST706232

Pays: Blackmore Vale

Eleven W–E orientated graves, with no grave-goods. The limits of the cemetery to the N and S were not reached, but the overall size of the cemetery may not have been much larger than the extent excavated. Two radiocarbon dates have dated the

cemetery to between the late C7th and the early C11th. The site lay in the ecclesiastical parish of Abbas and Templecombe, less than 50m from the boundary with Horsington. Linear earthworks and a possible Middle to Late Anglo-Saxon settlement have been located to the N of the parish boundary.

References: Newman 1992; Cherryson 2005b, 136; Rippon 2012, 67

Wells Cathedral, ST551458

Pays: Somerset Levels and Polden Hills

Directly associated: Roman mausoleum

A cemetery used on a cyclical basis between the C7th and the C11th, situated between the mausoleum (and later mortuary chapel) and the main body of the minster church to the W. Three were radiocarbon dated: AD 619–690 (Burial 257); AD 642–758 (Burial 300) and AD 685–889 (Burial 115).

References: Rodwell 2001, 60–72; Cherryson 2005b, 137

Wembdon Hill, ST279378

Pays: Vale of Taunton

Excavations and investigations between 1984 and 1990 recorded an inhumation cemetery with the remains of at least 22 individuals, aligned W–E with heads to the W. It is thought that the site was disturbed by medieval quarrying. Finds, perhaps grave-goods, in 2 graves included a bronze pin, a whetstone and an iron object. One inhumation was found with a shroud pin. No evidence of coffins was located, though one of the graves was defined with kerbstones. The cemetery has been assigned to the sub-Roman period. Recent dating suggests that the cemetery continued in use into the C10th.

References: Cherryson 2005b, 137–8; Webster 2008, 183, 187; Rippon 2012, 67

Winthill Farm, ST397584

Pays: Mendips

Burials were found to have been dug through demolished Roman structures within an extensive settlement during excavations carried out in 1954–6 by members of the Axbridge Caving Group and Archaeological Society. The recently rediscovered remains produced radiocarbon dates of AD 430–610 and 660–810 at 95.4% probability.

References: Aston *et al.* 2011

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KATE MEES is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Archaeology, Durham University.

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